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7 MOST TRUSTED MEDICAL SITES

NEW WAYS TO RESEARCH CURES

Plus

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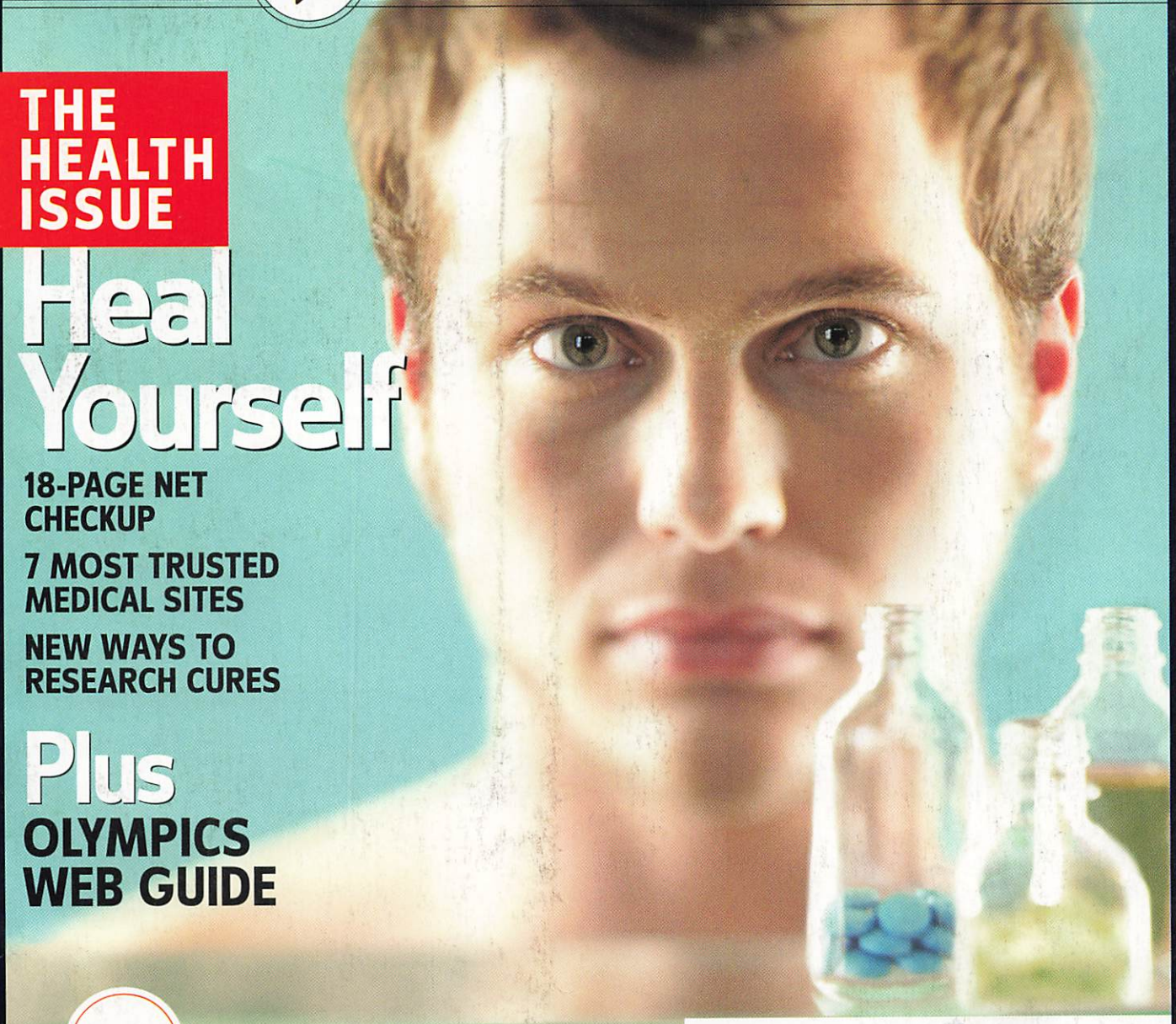
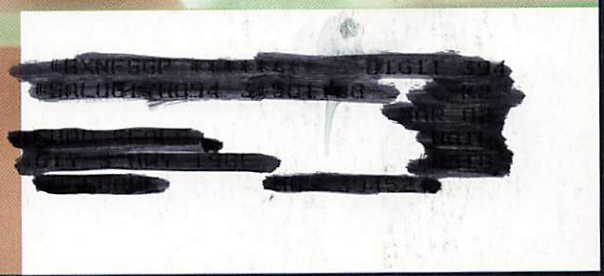


TESTING THE CAR SITES

TOP CYBERCOP



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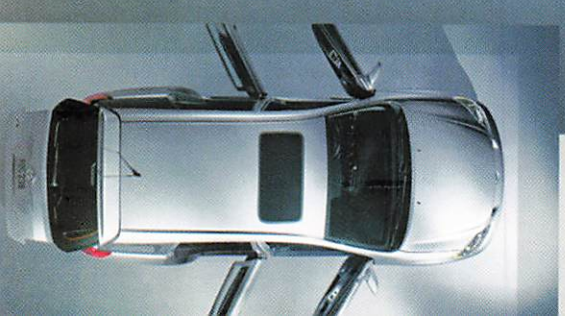

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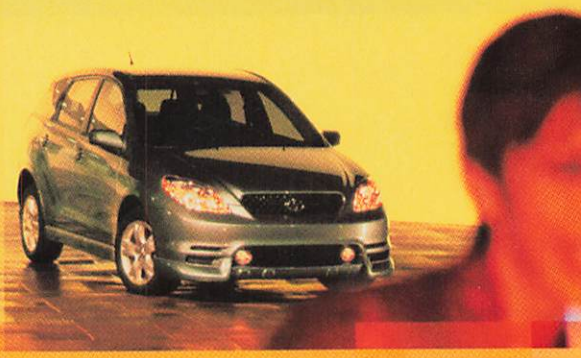

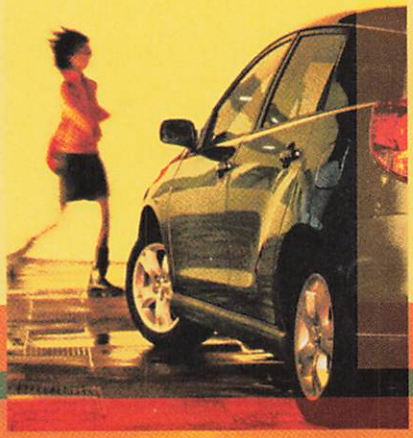

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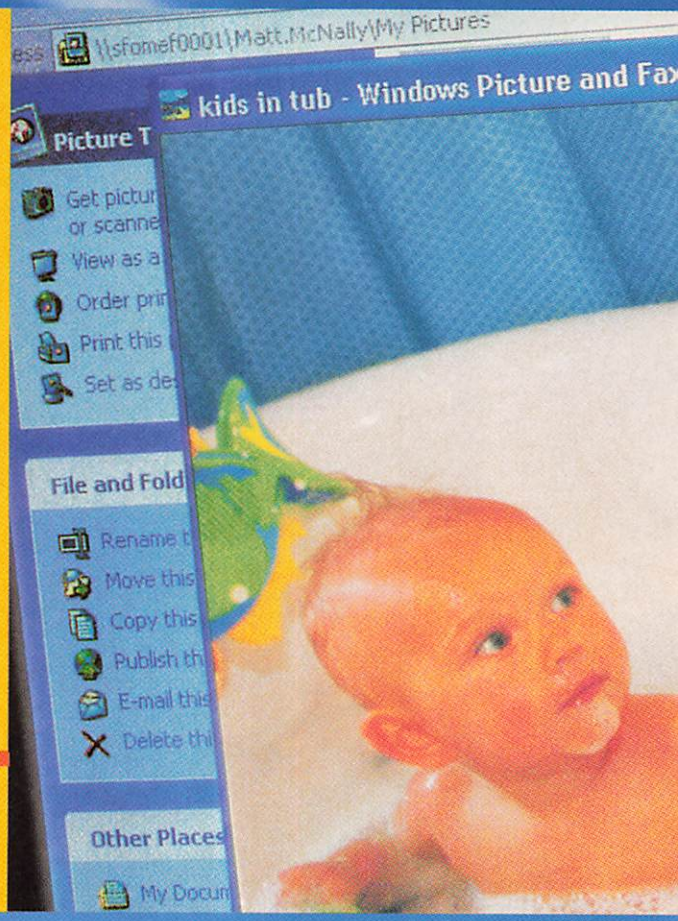

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NUMBER 2

YAHOO! INTERNET LIFE®

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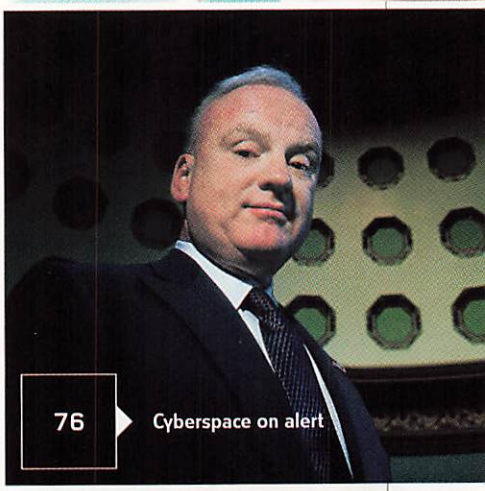

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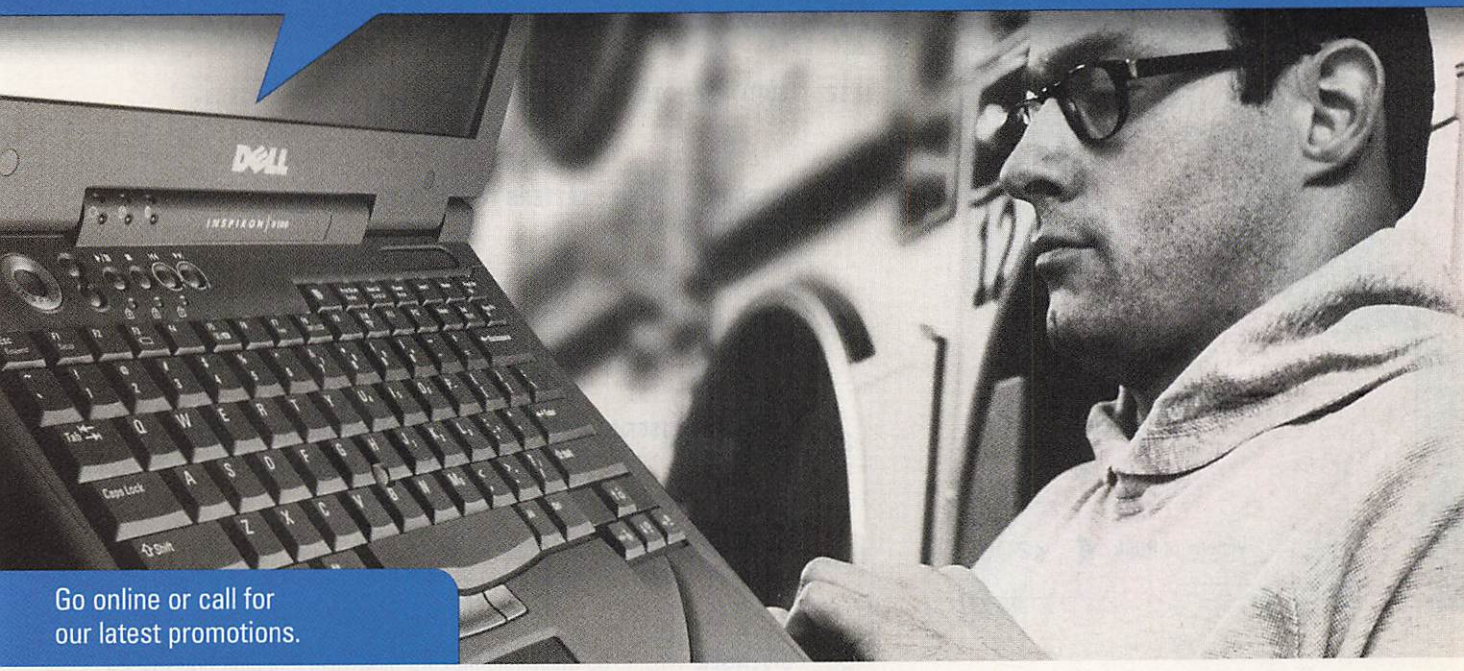

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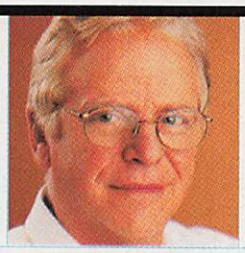

A Matter of Trust

WHAT'S THE PROGNOSIS FOR ONLINE HEALTH? GOING by the numbers, things look promising—more than half of all online users consult the Web on health topics. But studies also show that only a quarter of those who looked say they found what they actually needed. Mistrust of health information found online is more the rule than the exception. And that's as it *should* be. The Internet has thrown open the doors for people to do their own medical and health research, but it has also let in the snake-oil salesmen. There's a lot of data out there, but also a lot of doubt. What people want to know is, how do we uncover useful, reliable information? And if we can't look a doctor or a pharmacist in the eye, how do we know whom to trust?

The Internet has thrown open the doors for people to do their own medical and health research, but it has also let in the snake-oil salesmen

These tough questions are the reason we've devoted 18 pages of this issue to a special section on health and the Internet. There, you'll find in-depth reporting, loads of site reviews, and profiles of the most reliable health services, all assembled in consultation with health writers and some extremely Net-savvy physicians. As they compiled this section, I asked our team of editors and writers, headed up by executive editor **LARRY SMITH**, to keep in mind one overriding principle: Like our Old Way/Net Way department, we need to show what's possible online but also what is still better done offline (as in "Open your mouth and say *Ahh*").

Within these pages you'll find a report on how to use the Web to *stay* healthy ("Go to: Health," by **SHARON EPEL**, page 52); our foldout of the human body, annotated with sites that will help every part of you; our Web emergency kit (or, what to do *after* you've dialed 911); our authoritative list of the Net's "Seven Most Trusted Health Sites"; **BERNIE YEE**'s first-person account of his father's cancer diagnosis and their shared Web odyssey to find help ("Searching for a Cure," page 60); and a reflection on the power of message boards when you need them most ("Support Across the Boards," by **LANEY KATZ BECKER**, page 63). In the final section, a question that we've never needed to ask before ("Do Doctors Make Mouse Calls?") gets an answer from veteran health writer **MICHAEL CASTLEMAN**, page 64.

A side note: Until it was preempted by our coverage of September 11, our health special was scheduled for the November '01 issue. When we later revisited what we'd created (and started doing our updates; the Web never sleeps) we found that the subject matter had only taken on added urgency in the wake of the terrorist attacks and the continuing anthrax scare. You'll find additional resources on bioterrorism, anthrax, and the other newfound worries of this modern age at **yil.com/health**.

In a lighter vein: While television is probably the best way to experience the Olympics outside of heading to Utah, the Web can provide a unique depth that truly puts the events in context. It's all in our special Winter Olympics Net Guide, compiled by Senior Associate Editor **JEREMY CAPLAN**. The same goes for car buying: Though people still love to kick the tires, practically no one purchases a car anymore without first doing research on the Net. With that in mind, in this month's Web Lab we've tested and ranked the car sites you can trust the most. Trust: the theme of our issue, and a theme we know is on our readers' minds these days.

X Barry Golson

BARRY GOLSON, EDITOR IN CHIEF

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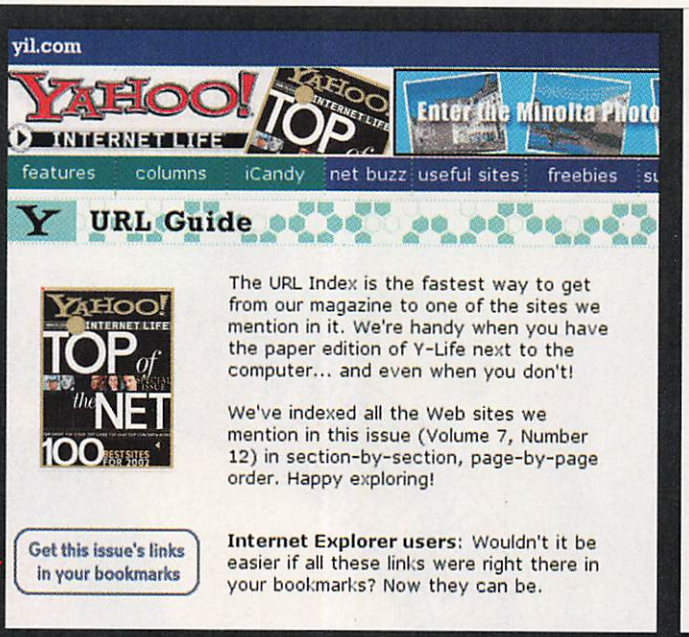

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Name That Tune

"Animals strike curious poses"
"My eyes dilate, my lips go green"
"Paul, I think I told you I'm a lover, not a fighter"
"Food is served and you're stone cold munchin'"

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- INTERNET MENTAL HEALTH | mentalhealth.com
- PATIENT INFORMATION: NEUROLAND | neuroland.com/pt
- AMERICAN LUNG ASSOC. | lungusa.org
- ALLERNET | allernet.com
- SPINEUNIVERSE | spineuniverse.com
- MALEHEALTH | malehealth.co.uk
- ASHA: AMERICAN SOCIAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION | www.ashastd.org
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- CLINICALTRIALS.GOV | clinicaltrials.gov
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- AMERICANHEART.ORG | americanheart.org
- IKIDNEY.COM | ikidney.com
- HEPATITIS CENTRAL | hepatitis-central.com
- COMPUTER RELATED REPETITIVE STRAIN INJURY | www.engr.unl.edu/ee/eeshop/rsi.html
- REFLEXOLOGY RESEARCH PROJECT | reflexology-research.com
- AC: ARTHRITISCENTRAL.COM | arthritiscentral.com
- FOOT.COM | foot.com
- JAMA WOMEN'S HEALTH | ama-assn.org/special/womh
- OBGYN.NET | obgyn.net
- BREASTCANCER.ORG | breastcancer.org

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- KAISER PERMANENTE'S HEALTH INFORMATION CHECK UP! | kp.org/hicheckup
- FORBES.COM: FORBES BEST OF THE WEB | forbes.com/bow
- MEDSCAPE HEALTH FOR CONSUMERS | medscapehealth.com
- WEBMD HEALTH | my.webmd.com
- NAT'L INST. OF HEALTH | www.nih.gov
- MAYOCLINIC.COM | mayoclinic.com
- AMA | ama-assn.org
- MEDLINEPLUS HEALTH INFORMATION | medlineplus.gov
- MERCK-MEDCO | merck-medco.com
- QUACKWATCH | quackwatch.com
- LINKPOPULARITY.COM | linkpopularity.com
- WEBMD | webmd.com
- EDIETS.COM | ediets.com
- DRUGSTORE.COM | drugstore.com
- DIETSMART | dietsmart.com
- MEDSCAPE | medscape.com
- DRKOOP.COM | drkoop.com
- THE BREAST CANCER SITE | thebreastcancersite.com
- WEBRX | webrx.com

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- YAHOO! | yahoo.com
- LOOKSMART | looksmart.com
- MEDLINEPLUS HEALTH INFORMATION | medlineplus.gov
- MEMORIAL SLOAN-KETTERING CANCER CENTER | www.mskcc.org
- CANCERNET | cancernet.gov
- INTELIHEALTH | intelihealth.com
- NAT'L INST. OF HEALTH | www.nih.gov
- QUACKWATCH | quackwatch.com
- HON: HEALTH ON THE NET FOUNDATION | www.hon.ch
- PROSTATE CANCER RESEARCH INSTITUTE | prostate-cancer.org
- CANCERTRIALS | cancertrials.nci.nih.gov
- CENTERWATCH | centerwatch.com
- THE CIRCLE | prostatepointers.org/circle
- AMERICAN CANCER SOC. | cancer.org
- CANCERFACTS.COM | cancerfacts.com
- ONCOLINK | oncolink.com
- WEBMD | webmd.com
- THE CANCER GENOME ANATOMY PROJECT | cgap.nci.nih.gov

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- AMERICAN CANCER SOC. | cancer.org
- Y-ME | y-me.org
- JUST US | members.aol.com/gmcmullen/justhome.htm
- DEAR STRANGER, DEAREST FRIEND | dearstranger.com

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- MEDLINEPLUS HEALTH INFORMATION | medlineplus.gov
- PSYCHIATRY-ONLINE | psychiatry-online.com
- PARTNERS ONLINE SPECIALTY CONSULTATIONS | www.partners.org/econsults

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- SALT LAKE 2002 | saltlake2002.com
- NBCOLYMPICS.COM | nbcolympics.com
- CNN/SI: 2002 WINTER OLYMPICS | cnnsi.com/olympics
- MSN: ESPN | espn.com
- CBSSPORTSLINE.COM | sportsline.com
- 2002 OLYMPICS EDUCATION | www.uen.org/2002
- BRITANNICA.COM | britannica.com
- USOLYMPICTEAM.COM | usolympicteam.com
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- KODAK.COM | kodak.com
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- U.S. FIGURE SKATING ONLINE | usfsa.org
- FSWORLD | fsworld.com
- THE MICHELLE KWAN FAN PAGE! | heatherw.com/mk
- SPEED SKATING CANADA | speedskating.ca
- SPEEDSKATING.COM | speedskating.com
- GOOGLE GROUPS | groups.google.com
- CANADA FREESTYLE SKI ASSOCIATION | freestyleski.com
- JONNYMOSELEY.COM | jonnymoseley.com
- AIRBERGY.COM | airbergy.com
- UNITED STATES SKI TEAM: ALPINE NEWS | www.usskiteam.com/alpine/alpine.htm
- SKI RACING | skiracing.com
- FIS | fis-ski.com
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- SNOWBOARDING.COM | snowboarding.com
- SNOWBOARDING2 | snowboarding2.com
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- BOBSLEDGIRL.COM | bobsledgirl.com
- JAMAICAN BOBSLED TEAM | jamaicanbobsled.com
- ALLEN'S BIATHLON PAGE | biathlon.net
- INTERNATIONAL BIATHLON UNION | www.ibu.at
- UNITED STATES BIATHLON ASSOCIATION | usbiathlon.org
- CURLING.COM | curling.com
- UNITED STATES CURLING ASSOC. | usacurl.org
- CURLINGZONE.COM | curlingzone.com

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- RENTMYDVD | rentmydvd.com
- DVDOVERNIGHT.COM | dvdovernight.com
- ELANCE | elance.com
- DSL REPORTS | dslreports.com

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- ETESTING LABS: U.S. ISP RATINGS | etestinglabs.com/main/inetbmk/usratings.asp
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- YAHOO! CLASSIFIEDS | classifieds.yahoo.com
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- STORYDATA.COM | storydata.com
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- SALARY.COM: WHAT ARE YOU WORTH? | https://secure.salary.com/salaryreport/layoutscripts/srpl_overview.asp
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- GIVE.ORG | give.org
- GUIDESTAR | guidestar.org

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- WOOLRICH | woolrich.com
- ELUXURY | eluxury.com
- SHERRY-LEHMANN | sherry-lehmann.com
- GIORGIO ARMANI | armanicasa.com

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- HOMESTORE.COM | homestore.com
- THE OLD HOUSE WEB | oldhouseweb.com
- OLD HOUSE JOURNAL ONLINE: PAINTING HISTORIC INTERIORS | oldhousejournal.com/notebook/npsbriefs/brief28.shtm
- NEIMAN MARCUS | neimanmarcus.com
- ELUXURY | eluxury.com
- UMBRA | www.umbra.com

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- J. CREW | jcrew.com
- EDDIE BAUER | eddiebauer.com
- CAFFÈ TUCANO | caffetucano.com
- VIVRE | vivre.com
- THE WEDDING LIST | theweddinglist.com
- MACYS.COM | macys.com

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- ALTAVISTA: IMAGE SEARCH | altavista.com/sites/search/simage
- EXCITE: PRECISION SEARCH | search.excite.com
- LYCOS MULTIMEDIA | multimedia.lycos.com
- DITTO.COM | ditto.com
- GOOGLE | google.com
- BLINKINGCURSOR | blinkingcursor.com
- JEEVES' TOURS | etour.com
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- HIFI.COM | hifi.com
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- SOUND BLASTER | soundblaster.com
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- ZDNET: UPDATES.COM | updates.com
- COMPUSA.COM | compusa.com
- LEARN2.COM: LEARN2 CLEAN YOUR COMPUTER | learn2.com/05/0554/0554.asp
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- LOVETRON 5000 | iamlost.com/features/lovetron
- HUMAN FOR SALE | humanforsale.com
- THE CAPTAIN EURO FAN CLUB | cpteuro.com
- THE WAY OF THE EXPLODING STICK | www.evolver.co.uk/wayofthestick.html
- GPS DRAWING | gpsdrawing.com

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- SUPER BOWL XXXVI | superbowl.com
- SUPERBOWLXXXVI.ORG | www.superbowlxxxvi.org
- EPICURIOUS: SUPER BOWL | epicurious.com/e_eating/e04_superbowl/superbowl.html
- AGATHA CHRISTIE | agathachristie.com
- MYSTERYNET.COM | mysterynet.com
- SUE GRAFTON | suegrafton.com
- PATRICIACORNWELL.COM | patriciacornwell.com
- ROTTEN TOMATOES | rottentomatoes.com
- MRQE: MOVIE REVIEW QUERY ENGINE | www.mrqe.com
- METACRITIC | metacritic.com
- THE FLICK FILOSOPHER | flickfilosopher.com

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- MASTERS OF PHOTOGRAPHY | masters-of-photography.com
- MAN RAY | www.manray-photo.com
- WEEGEE'S WORLD | www.icp.org/weegee
- ZONEZERO | zonezero.com
- EARTH & SKY RADIO SERIES | earthsky.com
- WWW.SKYCALENDAR.COM | skycalendar.com
- INCONSTANT MOON | inconstantmoon.com
- ARCHAEOASTRONOMY | library.thinkquest.org/C0118421
- FINDING HOMESCHOOL SUPPORT ON THE INTERNET | geocities.com/athens/8259
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- @INTERNETHOMESCHOOL.COM | internethomeschool.com
- HOMESCHOOL.COM | homeschool.com

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- YAHOO! PERSONALS | personals.yahoo.com
- MATCHMAKER | matchmaker.com
- FRIENDFINDER.COM | friendfinder.com
- ARABNET | arab.net
- PLANETARABIA | english.planetarabia.com
- ISLAMICITY.COM | islamicity.com
- ISLAMIC STUDIES, ISLAM, ARABIC, AND RELIGION | www.arches.uga.edu/~godlas
- CHILDBIRTH.ORG | childbirth.org
- BABYCENTER | babycenter.com

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- CAMCORDERINFO.COM | camcorderinfo.com
- CNET: CAMCORDERS | cnet.com/electronics/0-1429201.html
- 2-POP: DISCUSSION FORUMS | 2-pop.com/boards
- FOR ROMANTIC GIFTS | forromanticgifts.com
- HENRYANDJUNE.COM | henryandjune.com
- KAMA SUTRA COLLECTIONS | kamasutra.safeshopper.com

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- CARBUYINGTIPS.COM | carbuyingtips.com
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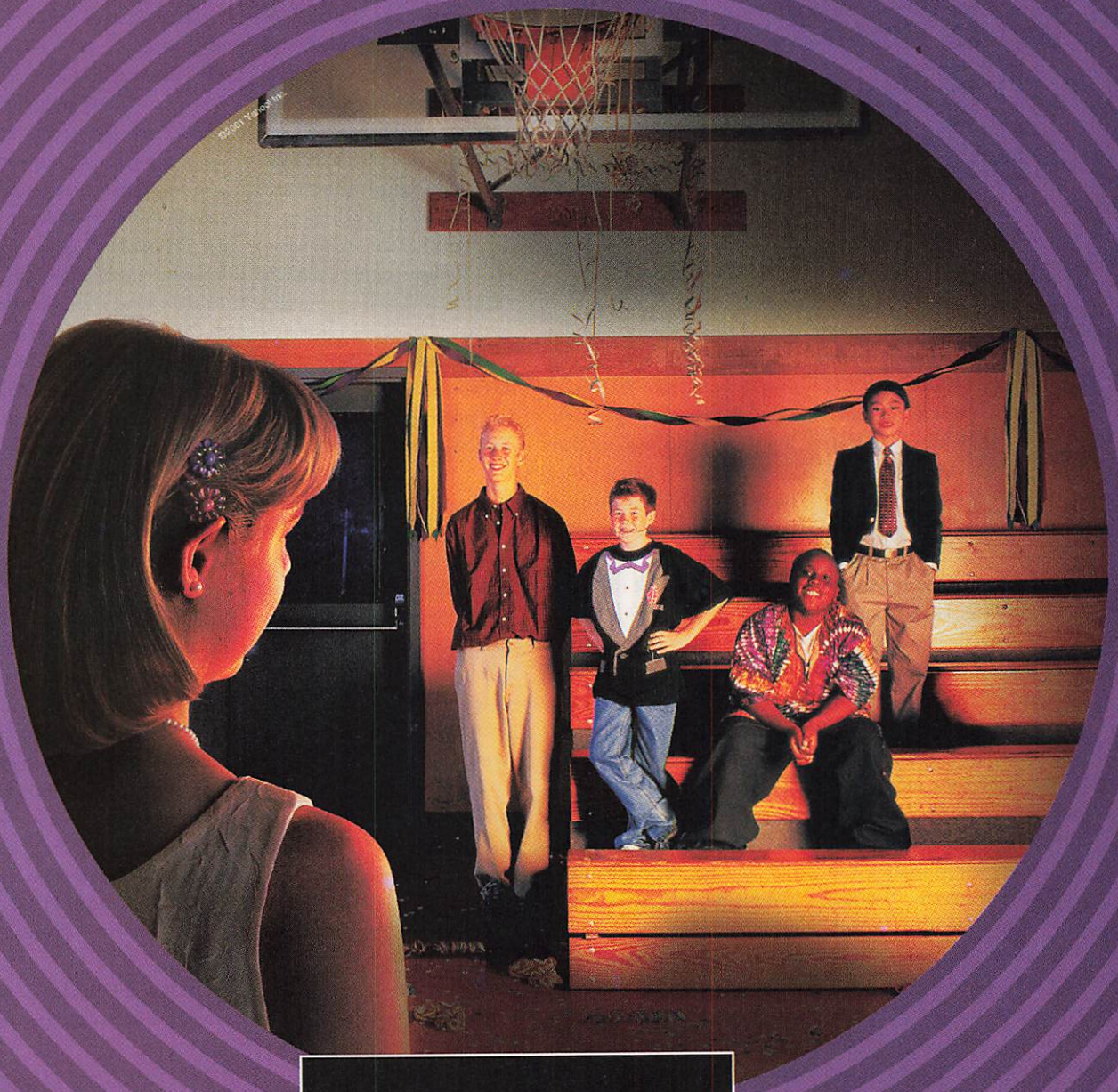

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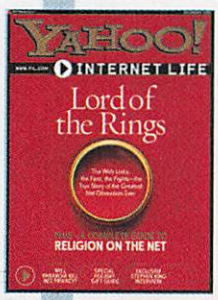

PURE PRIDE

I am one of the purists mentioned in your December *Lord of the Rings* feature ["Hobbits Go Hollywood," page 104]. I am proud to be represented as such and definitely will not be seeing any of the films Peter Jackson and his crew are working on. I will not look at artwork accompanying any form of *LOTR* save that by Tolkien himself—and that, only because he wrote the books.

I consider the mental images I've come up with to be the birth of pure creation between myself as reader and Tolkien as writer, and I choose not to impair that vision with someone else's vision. I hope that these films—as they cannot hope to realistically create an image of Tolkien's world—will stimulate interest in the books, inspiring new readers. *Namarie! Nai hir-uva-lye Valimar!*

ANN SHARDA
@hotmail.com

NEWLY ENTHUSED

I am not a big fan of J.R.R. Tolkien. I read *The Hobbit* when I was a kid and I didn't care much for it, and I saw one of the animated *Hobbit* movies way back when. But your story on the *Lord of the Rings* movie and its fans was great, even for a non–Tolkien head like me. Kudos for turning me into a fan.

LEE GIBBS
@hotmail.com

RELIGIOUS OFFENSE

I was dismayed by the article "Playing God" by Douglas Rushkoff [December '01, page 101]. I understand his concern about fundamentalism. But his tone is antireligious to the point of antagonism—the very thing he derides in other people—and he paints all religions with the same brush.

ALAN HOFFMAN
@cingular.com

To say that Osama bin Laden and his band of murderous thugs are fundamentalist is not only a gross misrepresentation of the facts but also just plain silly. Those who perpetrated the horrendous 9/11 attack were not following any tenets of Islam; they were followers of a crazy, evil man. Your conclusions on how Christians view the rapture and Armageddon are equally ridiculous. Your bias against any religion with moral certainties runs rampant throughout what had the makings of an interesting article.

YENN KELLEY
@earthlink.net

As a Christian, I was highly offended by your article "Playing God." The author brushes off Christianity as a "story" (despite massive scholarly evidence) and shows incredible ignorance of the beliefs of Christians when he says, "If you subscribe to the right story and follow the rules, all you have to do is hang in there and wait for the ending, and you'll be saved." He makes it sound as if fundamentalists—those who dare to believe in a truth that goes beyond our likes and dislikes, a truth that might challenge our opinions and make us change who we are—are out there sacrificing animals on the altar, "declaring their first holy wars," or "blindly following the unilateral decrees of their leaders."

What I find ironic is that if I were to blindly categorize a group of people with such negative labels as the author does Christians in particular and fundamentalists in general, I would be told that I was practicing discrimination. But he does it, and he's progressive.

SARA STEWART
@yahoo.com

Douglas Rushkoff responds: My essay was not meant to criticize religion in the least. Rather, I hoped to show how blind, exclusive faith can make one more prone to violent extremism. By reducing our sacred myths to holy decree or historical fact, we rob them of their ability to serve us as thinking adults.

Clearly, Bin Laden is not a "religious" man but a despot who exploits the harsh and inviolable dogma of extreme fundamentalism to create blind executioners of his military will. But by the same token, Jerry Falwell's early explanation of the loss of life as the will of an angry God against feminists and homosexuals is an opportunistic exploitation of his own followers' dogmatic intolerance. He fit the tragedy neatly into his predetermined story.

As a fan of God, my point is not to undermine religion but to encourage us to invigorate our faith with our own thought and, through networking, with the thought of others. If anyone felt singled out by my critique of intolerant extremism, I'm sorry. But I also invite you to consider whether the discomfort I caused might best lead to a healthy reevaluation of the smug prejudices that cloud all of our ties to faith. After all, Jacob became Israel not by simply hearing the word of God but by wrestling actively with it.

PEN 1, SWORD 0

Bravo, Robert Scheer ["Welcome Home, Big Brother," December '01, page 71]. Americans may be united, but they seem oblivious to the fact that with one swift stroke of a legislative signature, many of the freedoms and privacies for which we have battled for more than 200 years have been curtailed. One has to wonder whether to fear the government as much as the terrorists.

ROBERT WELSH
@monad.net

You talkin' to us? We hope so! Write to us at yilreadermail@ziffdavis.com.

SITE GAG

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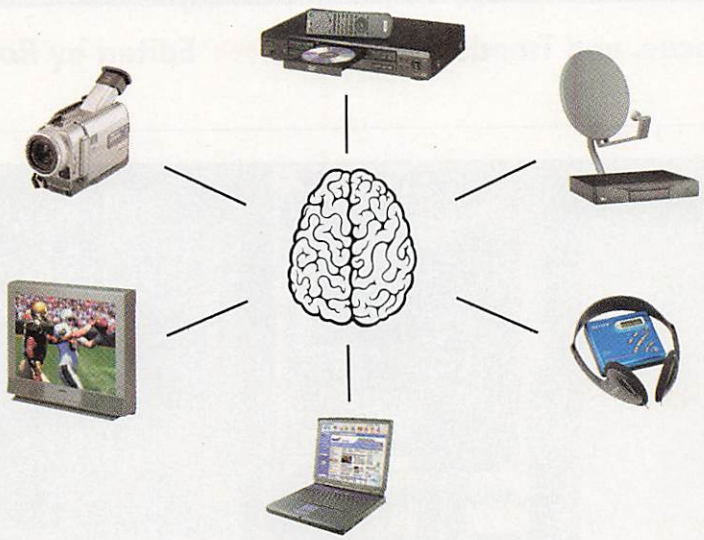

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People, Places, and Trends on the Net >>> Edited by Ron Bel Bruno

FEBRUARY 2002

STEVE MCCURRY/MONASTERY IN ARANYAPRATHET, THAILAND 1998

THEY SPEAK THROUGH THE LENS

Shortly after the Soviet invasion in 1979, Steve McCurry emerged from what he later called "the rocket-pulverized dust of Afghanistan" with rolls of film sewn into his clothing—his images were among the first to document that conflict. Since then, McCurry's photos have been published worldwide, as tribal wars and now an international battle continue to plague the struggling country. "South Southeast," a photographic essay at **Cultures on the Edge [culturesontheedge.com]**, serves as a fine model of what an online zine with a mission can accomplish. It's McCurry's sensitive portrait of the people, events, and colors of Afghanistan, as well as other Asian settings (including Thailand, above). These and other photographic journeys create an atmosphere of global awareness while also reminding the viewer that our society, though technologically advanced, is but one among many. **MEAGHAN O'NEILL**

26 RESCUE YOUR DVD PLAYER (AND YOURSELF) FROM TEEN-COMEDY HELL WITH **NET-BASED DVD RENTAL SERVICES** AS CLOSE AS YOUR MAILBOX

28 RANK YOUR ISP, FIND OUT WHAT YOU SHOULD BE EARNING, AND **LOCATE THE ULTIMATE CHAT** WITH THESE INCREDIBLY USEFUL SITES

30 DAVID SHEFF TESTS THE NET AND **ORDERS BELGIAN CHOCOLATES**, IDENTIFIES A SUSPICIOUS-LOOKING SPIDER, AND SENDS A BOOK TO SINGAPORE

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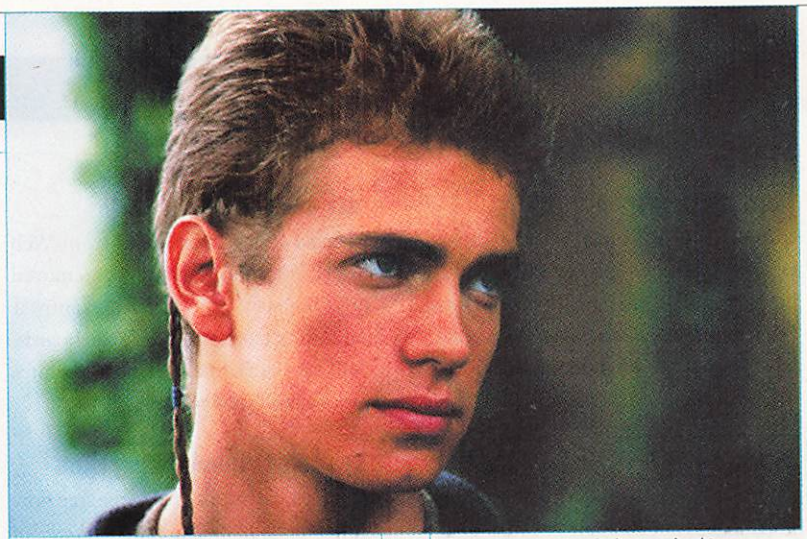
Net Briefs



STAR FUND-RAISER: Director George Lucas donated 15 *Star Wars* props, including an Anakin Skywalker (portrayed by Hayden Christensen, above) podracer model for eBay's Auction for America.

SPECIAL EFFECTS

What is thy bidding, my master? How about $45,000 for a Darth Maul lightsaber? In December, eBay's sputtering Auction for America disaster relief campaign (an effort to raise $100 million in 100 days for September 11 disaster relief organizations) received some much-needed props from movie titan George Lucas. The Jedimaster donated a *Phantom Menace* lightsaber, a Stormtrooper helmet, and models of Boba Fett, R2-D2, a Snowspeeder, and Anakin Skywalker's podracer, among other items, for sale on eBay's online auction block. At press time, Lucas's donated auction items had raised more than $120,000.

TV SLIDE

The dot-com shakeout notwithstanding, the Internet's reach continues to expand, and at television's expense. According to a survey conducted by the **UCLA Center for Communication Policy [ccp.ucla.edu/pages/internet-report.asp]**, Net users spend 4.5 fewer hours watching television per week than non-surfers. The study also observed an increase in the total amount of time users spent online in 2001 (9.8 hours per week, up from 9.4 in 2000) and an increase in the total number of Americans logging on (72 percent, up from 67 percent in 2000).

EXIT EXCITE

After AT&T backed out of a proposed bid for Excite@Home's assets, the once high-flying dot-com responded by cutting off high-speed connections to 850,000 AT&T broadband subscribers. While the defiant act resulted in lost service, untold frustration for surfers, and thousands of lost e-mails, AT&T managed to get 500,000 of its customers moved onto its own high-speed network within three days of the outage.

IDENTITY CRISIS

In recent months, America Online, American Express, General Motors, and other heavy-hitters joined Sun Microsystems' Liberty Alliance Project, a coalition to develop a standard for the future of Internet identification. This is presumably a response to Microsoft's .Net Passport, a program that ships with every copy of Windows XP and lets surfers automatically log into—and purchase products at—partner Web sites using a single passcode. Microsoft hopes .Net Passport will become the de facto authentication service on the Net, but it faces stiff opposition from Sun's Alliance. The battle is joined.

THAT'S ALL SHE WROTE

In December AOL Time Warner closed the book on its money-draining online publishing unit, iPublish.com. Company spokespeople say the media conglomerate will continue to publish e-books and may consider resuscitating the suspended Internet venture sometime in the future.

ENGLISH BEAT

Until now, English has been the Web's most prevalent language, but that's about to change. Research from the World Intellectual Property Organization indicates that Chinese will overtake English as the Web's lingua franca by 2007. Additionally, one-third of the Net's population will be non–English speaking by 2003, says the group, which manages the enforcement of intellectual property rights.

BAD APPLES

When Apple released a free upgrade of its Mac OS X on CD, Macolytes showed their thanks by exploiting a fault in the software that allowed users to do a full installation of the operating system (which normally retails for $129). A detailed explanation of the hack was posted at **MacFixIt [macfixit.com]** until the site received a cease-and-desist notice from Apple's lawyers.

21.3 MILLION Total number of Americans surfing at broadband speeds

THE CLICK AROUND THE NET CLIQUE: SCOTT ALEXANDER, ROB BERNSTEIN, ANGELA GUNN, MEAGHAN O'NEILL. WRITE TO CLICK AT CLICK@ZIFFDAVIS.COM

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Click! around the net

Save! Smart Moves...

VOTE OF CONFIDENCE

It looks as if Internet-only broadcasters will finally have to drop the Rodney Dangerfield act. The prestigious **Peabody Awards [www.peabody.uga.edu]**, which honor achievements in broadcasting, will finally recognize excellence in Webcasting during this year's ceremony on May 20. Now if only we could convince AMPAS to consider Web-only short films for Academy Awards.

IDENTITY CRISIS

A little privacy, please? Thank you. Responding to a meteoric rise in identity theft cases, many of them occurring online, the California Department of Consumer Affairs has opened the nation's first **Office of Privacy Protection [privacyprotection.ca.gov]**.

NYC'S FINEST GET TREATED

MedStrong International [medstrong.com], a company that allows patients and doctors to upload and access medical records online, is providing its services to the members of the NYPD and FDNY at no charge. Our cynical side wants to call it a PR ploy, but our better half says a gift is a gift.

Delete! ...Dubious Deeds

TALI-BANNED

After receiving complaints from Web surfers, both Yahoo! and Lycos removed "objectionable" pro-Taliban and antiwar comments from their message boards. Hold up—did someone forget what it is we're defending here?

THE GREAT FIREWALL EXTENDS

In its latest effort to stanch the free flow of information online (and make John Ashcroft look like a teddy bear in the process), China has shut down 17,488 Internet cafés and ordered thousands more to install surveillance software.

BLOGGERS UNITE

In a baffling e-mail to some webmasters, international tax and audit firm KPMG warned against unauthorized linking to the company home page, **KPMG [kpmg.com]**. The move incensed the blogging community, which responded by creating dozens of new links to the site. Either KPMG is completely clueless about the Web, or the firm has come up with the most ingenious marketing device for getting links since Tom Sawyer finagled a way to get his picket fence whitewashed.

'Our blackness does not make white people hate us; it is *their* racism that causes the hate'

JOHN WALKER, DUBBED THE "AMERICAN TALIBAN," POSING AS AN AFRICAN AMERICAN ONLINE IN 1995, AT AGE 14

Top of the Net

TOYS

Top five most searched-for toys at Lycos [lycos.com].

1 XBOX
2 GAMECUBE
3 PLAYSTATION 2
4 BARBIE
5 LEGOS

Rankings reflect purchases made during the week ending 11/24/01.

PETITIONS

Most popular national petitions at EThePeople [e-thepeople.com].

1 SEPT. 11 NATIONAL FIRE, POLICE, RESCUE WORKERS' DAY
2 DECLARE WAR ON TERRORISM
3 AFGHANI WOMEN
4 BRING PRAYER BACK TO SCHOOLS
5 INVESTIGATE GEORGE W. BUSH

Rankings reflect numbers for the week of 12/12/01.

PEOPLE

Most searched-for historical figures on Google [google.com].

1 PABLO PICASSO
2 VINCENT VAN GOGH
3 MARILYN MONROE
4 BRUCE LEE
5 ALBERT EINSTEIN

Rankings reflect Net searches made during the month of October.

netobsessions

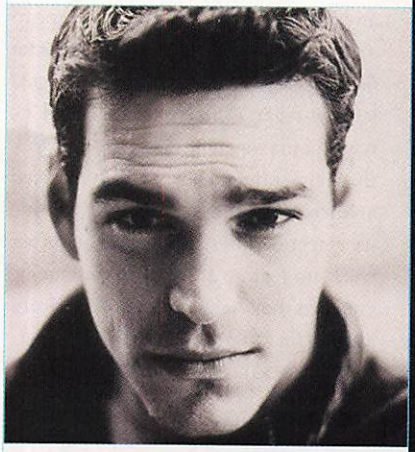
The Thing

The classic roadster is as lustworthy as ever, with its muscular V-8 engine, leather-trimmed seats, and power-retractable top. Step into the online showroom and take it for a virtual test drive @ **Ford: Thunderbird [fordvehicles.com/cars/thunderbird]**

The Girl

ASHLEIGH BANFIELD

The Emmy-winning newscaster is attracting fans—and controversy—with her coverage of the ground war in Afghanistan. Check her out @ **MSNBC TV: Ashleigh Banfield [msnbc.com/news/386376.asp]**

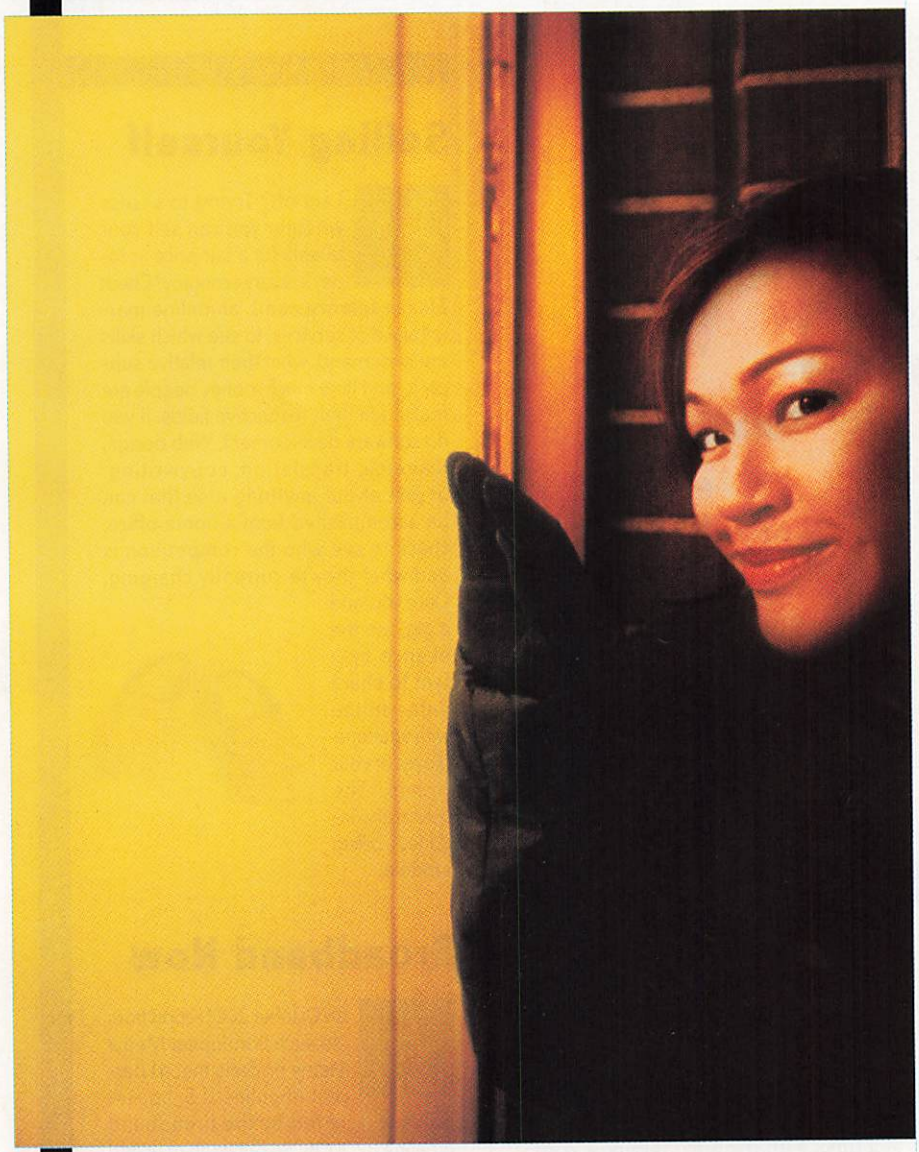


The Guy

EDDIE CIBRIAN

He's not a firefighter, but he plays one on TV. The former daytime soap star lights up the small screen as FDNY tough guy Jimmy Doherty on NBC's *Third Watch*. Join heated discussions about the actor @ **Yahoo! Clubs: Eddie Cibrian's FanClub [clubs.yahoo.com/clubs/eddiecibriansfanclub]**

CIBRIAN: KWAKU ALSTON/CORBIS OUTLINE



ANGELA BOATWRIGHT

TALE OF THE CITY

AUTHOR TRACY QUAN'S *DIARY OF A MANHATTAN CALL GIRL* IS A NOVEL BORN AND RAISED ON THE WEB

Is it a memoir, or is it simply a story about a woman who transitioned from nearly 20 years as a sex worker into a freelance writing career? Quan says her debut novel, based on the **Salon.com** column of the same name, is "100 percent fiction and 100 percent based on [my] own experiences." And to hear her tell it, the literary life is not only worse paid than her former work, but also much harder.

Smart readers will spot a host of allusions, from *The World of Suzie Wong* to *Belle de Jour,* and Quan's heroine, Nancy Chan, moves in a milieu every bit as rigid as those found in Jane Austen novels. She points out that being a call girl does have at least one thing in common with her career as one of the best-read columnists at Salon: "Web publishing has an immediate-feedback aspect that's very gratifying," says Quan.

A former runaway and teen prostitute, the author describes her call-girl routine as being closer to the posh spending-and-socializing whirl in *Sex and the City* than to any of those Lifetime woman-in-peril television films. The book's protagonist determinedly keeps her personal and professional worlds separate. But was her creator able to do the same? Quan says that if any of her then-current clients were reading her Salon columns, they certainly didn't let on.

Quan credits some smart friends she met online for drawing her into the writer's life—although she did consider being a librarian before deciding at age 14 to become a hooker. As a member of New York's pioneering ECHO online community during the early-to-mid 1990s, Quan befriended fellow ECHO member and Net legal expert Mike Godwin. Some initial freelance gigs eventually led to steady work from Salon, and it was Godwin who suggested the concept for her "Call Girl" column at the zine.

Her accounts of professional companionship eventually attracted several book editors, and, with Godwin's encouragement, she developed the idea for a fictionalized extension of her column. "I wanted to write a tract, an ideological tract!" she laughs. "Mike convinced me to write a novel."

And although Quan's latest work is printed on dead, sliced trees, the author prefers pixels. "Online publishing launched my career; it was just the right fit for me. It may be a generational thing as well. I think that online journalism is perhaps more receptive to people who are not part of the Ivy League mafia."

But that's another topic, one that will perhaps make it into a sequel. After all, when *Manhattan Call Girl* readers last see Nancy she's...hey, wait, buy the book. If there's one thing to be learned from talking with Tracy Quan, it's that there's something to be said for not just giving it all away.

—ANGELA GUNN

LET THE NET DO IT BETTER

SAVE TIME AND MONEY

RENT-A-FLICK

IN SEARCH OF DECENT DVDS? LET THEM COME TO YOU

You bought a DVD player because you really love movies, but your local video store seems to have five copies of *Dude, Where's My Car?* and none of *Casablanca*. Luckily, Net-based DVD rental services stock thousands of films, so movie buffs can escape from teen-comedy hell without setting foot outside (except to fetch the mail). Here's how it works. Create a list of movies to rent on the site. The service sends the first few titles on the list (the exact number depends on the plan—see chart below), usually with a prepaid mailer for returning them. When renters return one film, the next one on the list is sent. Customers can have anywhere from two to 10 films out at a time, with the price varying accordingly. Typically there are no due dates or late fees, so the faster the rentals are returned, the cheaper they are. Other services charge by the film. **JEREMY CAPLAN**

SITE	MONTHLY MEMBERSHIP	ON-DEMAND/ SINGLE RENTALS	FREE TRIAL?	FEATURES
NETFLIX (NETFLIX.COM)	2 films/$13.95, 3/$19.95, 5/$29.95, 8/$39.95	N/A	10 days free with the $19.95 plan only	Offers virtually every DVD ever produced; the first and most well-established service
RENTMYDVD (RENTMYDVD.COM)	2 films/$13.95, 4/$23.95, 10/$49.95	$3.50 for 9 days, plus $1.50 shipping for first DVD and 75 cents for each additional	No	Buy films you've rented at a 30 percent discount; includes special music video section
DVDOVERNIGHT.COM (DVDOVERNIGHT.COM)	N/A	$4 per movie, per week, minimum 2 per order, maximum 4, free shipping	Yes, first rental free	Rents adult films; NY, NJ, and PA residents

netsavers

Selling Yourself

SAVE TIME

Laid off? Trying to assess whether you can sell your talents for a fair price in today's dreary economy? Check **Elance (elance.com)**, an online marketplace of services, to see which skills are in demand, what their relative supply is, and how much money people are making in their respective fields. If you do software development, Web design, research, translation, copywriting, or just about anything else that can be accomplished from a home office, check to see who the competition is and what they're currently charging. Once you land a gig, use the eLance system to share data online with your employer or your clients. The service also includes a billing module.

Broadband Now

SAVE TIME

An October 2001 report from research firm Jupiter Media Metrix projects that 41 percent of online U.S. households will be fed by the broadband pipeline by 2006. So between now and then a lot of people need to choose which form of high-speed access they want. How to decide? Ask the people who've already done it. **DSL Reports (dslreports.com)**, a sort of *Zagat Survey* of high-speed Internet access, collects stories from broadband veterans, many of whom are more than willing to pass judgment on the providers. Zoom in to your county to determine its DSL readiness, and then read user reviews. A five-star rating system across six criteria gives you a good idea of what's good and bad about each provider. If you have questions, message boards attached to each review let you ask for more advice. **DON WILLMOTT**

TV VIEWER: JOHNER BILDBYRA/PHOTONICA; SLIPPERS: BRUNO FALKENSTEIN/GETTYONE

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ON "CORPORATE POLITICS"

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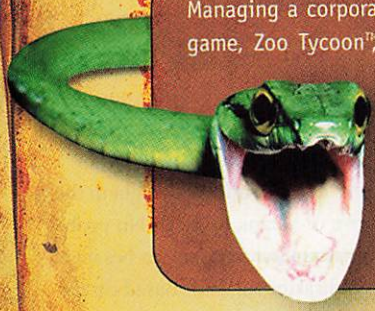


Managing a corporation isn't easy, but in the new PC game, Zoo Tycoon™, at least you know you're dealing with animals. Over 40 species in fact. Each with its own characteristics, habitat and needs. Hire zookeepers to help you care for them. That'll free you up to look after your guests — and profits.

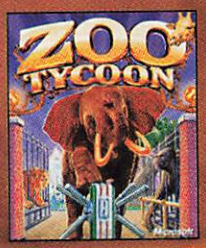
EVERY ORGANIZATION HAS EMPLOYEES THAT MONKEY AROUND.
For kicks your gorillas will throw poop at your guests. Those silly pranksters. Cage them properly by choosing one of 12 fencing materials.

SOME SNAKES ARE MORE POISONOUS THAN OTHERS.
They're sneaky, slimy and they reside in your House of Reptiles. Other buildings you'll put in your zoo include gift shops, hamburger stands and compost buildings. If you actually want to sell burgers, think twice about putting the burger stands next to the compost buildings.

THE WEAK ARE ALWAYS PREYED UPON.
Poor gazelles. Always eaten alive. But that happens when you're at the bottom of the corporate food chain. Keep them away from the lions' cage, unless your big cats deserve a 5-star meal.

WATCH OUT FOR THE SCAVENGERS AT THE BOTTOM.
Hyenas have no morals. But, these heartless beasts are easier to control in their home, the African grasslands. Build them a habitat where they can thrive off the land and feel at home by using over 175 exhibit and zoo-building materials.

Office politics are only one part of Zoo Tycoon. For more info on other facets of the game, go to microsoft.com/games/zootycoon



EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB — MILD VIOLENCE

BLUE FANG GAMES

Microsoft microsoft.com/games/zootycoon

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THIS MONTH'S MOST PRACTICAL DESTINATIONS BY JEREMY CAPLAN

Interpret Dreams

"Well, there was this blue elephant, and it was talking to Mary Tyler Moore on a rotary phone...." If you're the type who likes to decode your dreams, describe your nocturnal fantasies at **MSN: Astrology: The Dream Dictionary [astrology.msn.com/thirdeye/dream]** and find out what all those odd images from your subconscious are trying to tell you. The automatic interpretation is based on keywords that are mentioned in your description, so be specific. Good news: "Blue indicates an end to your worries," and "elephants are almost always a lucky omen."

Rank Your ISP

Everyone hates slow modem dial-ups and never-ending waits for pages to load. During those long dark nights of your ISP's soul, it's natural to wonder whether you might be better off with another provider. Visit **eTesting Labs: U.S. ISP Ratings [etestinglabs.com/main/inetbmk/usratings.asp]** (disclosure: it's owned by Ziff Davis Media, which also publishes this magazine), and take a look around. Find out how competing ISPs compare on connection speeds and how they stack up on those all-important Web download times. There's no time to waste.

Estimate Trade-In Value

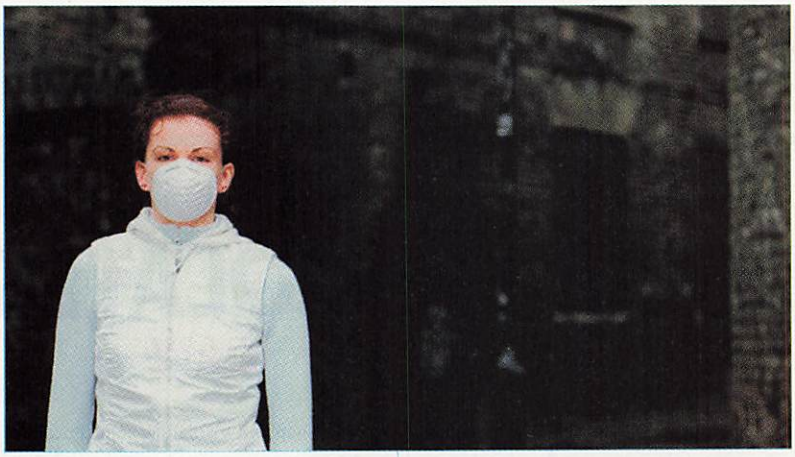
If you're car shopping and want to know what you can get for your current wheels, log on to **Yahoo! Autos: Used Car Guide [cars.yahoo.com/usedcars]**, where you can price just about any model from 1981 to the present. Quoted trade-in values are based on Kelley Blue Book information and Edmunds.com True Market Value Pricing, and are determined by mileage, the condition of the car, and its features. Once you've ascertained your car's value, you can list your vehicle, free of charge, through **Yahoo! Classifieds [classifieds.yahoo.com]**—there's a link directly to this area.

Prepare for the Worst

You're hiking along, minding your own business, when suddenly you're attacked by a bear. Or maybe you're walking down the street and are suddenly caught in the cross fire of a bank robbery. No problem. **WorstcaseScenarios.com** teaches step-by-step disaster survival. Based on the best-selling book *The Worst-Case Scenario Survival Handbook,* the site suggests techniques for combating a wide range of calamities. For instance, if you're traveling in quicksand country, always bring along a stout pole. If you're being beaten up, try to take punches in the forehead, where the offending fist will do the least damage. Not surprisingly, the site's motto is borrowed from Mr. Murphy: "Anything that can go wrong will."

SEND US NEWS OF YOUR USEFUL FIND! WRITE TO IUS@ZIFFDAVIS.COM

BED: STEPHEN SWINTEK/GETTYONE; SNAKE: JAMES BALOG/GETTYONE



Track Bioterror's Impact

Beyond the emotional and psychological impact of last September's terrorist attacks, there are many economic implications. **Storydata.com** takes the facts and figures behind the headlines and converts them into fascinating interactive charts and graphs that you can manipulate to do your own fact-finding. Discover what the true cost of a large-scale biological attack might be, and cross-compare for various biological agents. Fascinating, if frightening, stuff.

Decode Names

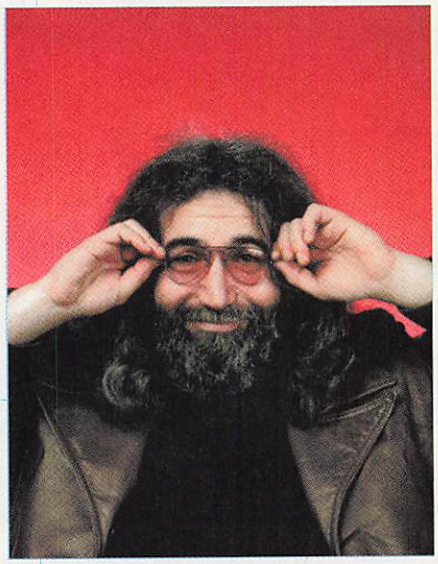
Ever wondered what Belinda means ("beautiful dragon"), or why your friend was named Roger ("famous spear")? **Behind the Name [behindthename.com]** reveals the etymology of the names you've taken for granted. Built on a sizable database, the site catalogs thousands of the most common names, along with many you've never heard of. Check to see how particular names have drifted in and out of popularity over the past 100 years. Hello, Jacob and Madison; so long, Clarence and Hortense.

Earn What You Deserve

You're underpaid, and you know it. Now prove it with **Salary.com: What Are You Worth? [https://secure.salary.com/salaryreport/layoutscripts/srpl_overview.asp]**. This efficient calculator takes your job description and salary history and estimates your current market value. For $29.95, you get a detailed report showing how much you're really worth. It'll be great leverage for your next salary negotiation or job hunt.

Trade a Bootleg Tape

Deadheads, rejoice. There's finally an easy way to trade those bootleg concert tapes online. **Tape Trader Network: Search for Traders [tapetradernetwork.com/search.asp]** caters to anyone who's ever snuck a tape recorder into an arena. Enter a list of your tapes, and then search the site to see what other traders have to offer. Grateful Dead fans will do best (there are 1,964 registered in this category), but the range of artists available is astonishing. Wayne Newton, anyone?



WOMAN IN MASK: CLARISA LEAHY/GETTYONE; KITCHEN: ROB MELNYCHUK/GETTYONE; JERRY GARCIA: ROGER RESSMEYER/CORBIS

...and downloads

IM INTERNATIONALLY

You may already have a lot of friends on your instant-message buddy list, but here's a way to add some *amigos*, *amies*, and *freunds* as well. **Instant Messenger Translator [paralink.com/ims]** translates your AOL or ICQ instant messages on the fly. It works in chatrooms, too. Just select and copy an incoming text paragraph, paste it into the IM Translator window, and get its translation. Your outbound messages pass through the same window as they go on their way. *Free.*

BUILD A VERY FINE HOUSE

Toss the ruler and graph paper. The next time you want to reconfigure your kitchen or add that master bedroom-bath suite you've been hankering for, get a running start with software from **Abracadata [abracadata.com].** Design Your Own Home Architecture is a full-feature drawing program for creating 2-D top-view plans. Use it for quick sketches, or get serious with such tools as the automatic stud placer or the layering system that lets you separate plumbing and electrical plans. *$29.99 (free demos available).*

PLAN A REUNION

A lot goes into a successful meeting or reunion: There are the invitations, the RSVPs, the schedules, the budgets, the name tags...and several other things you won't think of until an hour before. If you're the one who's put in charge, curse your luck, and then turn to **Reunion Planner [minutiaesoftware.com/reunion.htm]** for help. It's easy to design the invitations, send them, track attendance, plan the budget, print photo name tags, generate a souvenir book, and send follow-up letters. *$59.95 (free demos available).*

DON WILLMOTT

COMPARING THE TRIED-AND-TRUE WITH THE NET-AND-NEW BY DAVID SHEFF

BUYING BELGIAN CHOCOLATES

OLD WAY

1 For Valentine's Day, Belgian chocolates are a sure bet. Our local shop has a fabulous variety for $5 and up, depending on the quantity, quality, and packaging. I chose a gorgeous assortment in a heart-shaped box.

TIME ELAPSED 20 minutes salivating and trying to wrangle samples from the salesperson

COMMENTS If you're able to present the gift in person, the Old Way is cheaper and more satisfying—for the sender and the receiver.

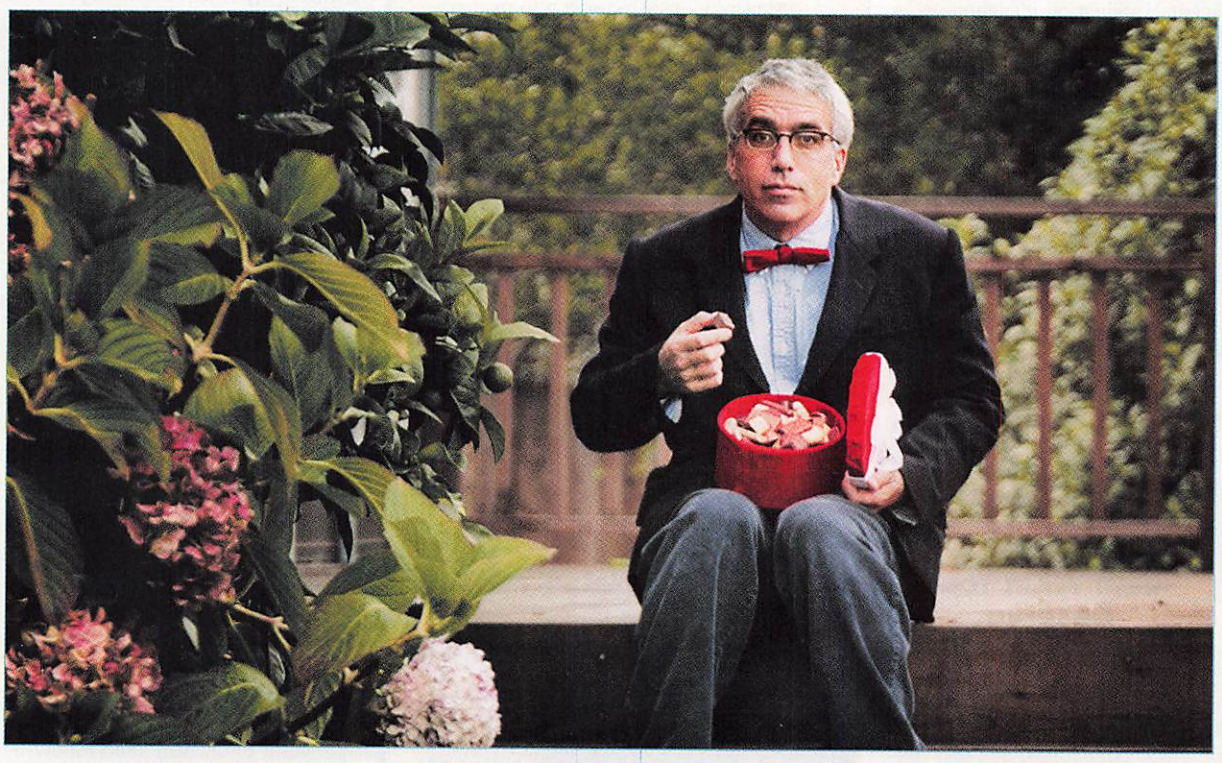
NET WAY

1 **The Belgian Chocolate Shop [www.orderline.com/chocolate]** has heart-shaped boxes starting at about $15. A beautiful jewelry box costs $90, and you can fill it with milk-chocolate hearts, an assortment, or some other variety. Still, shipping makes it cost more than at local stores.

2 **Nirvana Belgian Chocolates [nirvanachocolates.com]** has some of the best chocolates I have ever tried. The prices range from a $19.95 collection to some that are more than $100—and worth every penny.

TIME ELAPSED 22 minutes

COMMENTS If you have to ship (rather than personally present) the chocolates, the Net Way is easier—but no samples.



BART NAGEL

WINNER: TIE **The Old Way is best if you're hand-delivering; the Net Way, for faraway loves.**

SENDING A BOOK TO SINGAPORE

OLD WAY

1 As a gift, I wanted to send a copy of *Ansel Adams at 100* to a friend in Singapore who's a lover of the American wilderness. My local independent bookstore doesn't ship, which meant that I would have to buy the book ($120) and then send it myself via U.S. mail, FedEx, UPS, or another service.

2 I called the various companies and found out that shipping would cost between $9 and $50, depending on the type of delivery. (Even though I was sending the Old Way, I checked postage the Net Way, using the U.S. Postal Service's **International Calculator [ircalc.usps.gov/weight.asp?Contents=1]**.)

3 The nearby Borders store would send the book by UPS for about $20, for delivery in four to seven days. The cost of the book was about the same.

TIME ELAPSED 45 minutes

COMMENTS Having the bookstore ship the gift is obviously easier than mailing it yourself.

NET WAY

1 Headed first to **AllBookstores.com** to find the best price. **Amazon.com** weighed in at $105, so I went there to find out about shipping costs. The charge was $6.99 to ship the book the slow way (four to six weeks) or $29.99 the quick way (three days). Amazon offered a great price and provided the simplest alternative, since everything was done quickly online.

TIME ELAPSED 22 minutes

COMMENTS The book ended up arriving in 10 days. My friend was duly appreciative.

WINNER: NET WAY **If you know what you want and need to send it, the Web saves time, money, and hassle.**

IDENTIFYING A SPIDER

OLD WAY

1 The kids found a strange-looking spider (dead). In case others were lurking, I wanted to make sure it wasn't poisonous. Called the University of California–Berkeley department of biology and was told to send in the spider. We did.

2 The very nice professor who called us back said that it was a *Phanias concoloratus,* commonly found in California. No, it's not poisonous. Good thing.

TIME ELAPSED 2 weeks waiting for the call

COMMENTS The kids asked if they could get one as a pet. I suggested a fish.

NET WAY

1 Found numerous sites about arachnids. Some of the best included **The Science Spiders by Dr. Kain [sciencespiders.com/TheScienceSpiders/spiders.htm]** and **University of Kentucky Entomology [uky.edu/agriculture/entomology/entfacts/struct/ef622.htm]**.

2 Determined that the spider wasn't a black widow or recluse, but couldn't identify the type because there were so many similar-looking ones. Decided to wait for the scientist's verdict.

TIME ELAPSED 45 minutes online

COMMENTS While the Web didn't identify the species, it did provide a lot of info about these web makers.

WINNER: OLD WAY **When it comes to creepy-crawlies, turns out it's best to go straight to the source.**

e-venger

CRUSADING FOR TRUTH, JUSTICE, AND THE INTERNET WAY BY LAURA FISHER KAISER

DO THE MATH

Q I bid on a monitor at **uBid [ubid.com]** for $29 and checked a box for $6.99 FedEx ground shipping. However, I was charged $41.24 for shipping—and it came by UPS! The site never told me the total shipping cost, and I didn't discover the overcharge until I got my debit card statement. I am outraged and have e-mailed uBid many times but received only auto-responses saying its reps are backlogged.

DEBBIE NELSEN
Waupaca, Wisconsin

A What a crazy world we live in that you would pay more to ship an item than for the item itself. Perhaps you were suffering from lowball fever, whereby the afflicted are so overcome by a product's too-good-to-be-true price that they are temporarily blinded to the fine print.

'Perhaps you were suffering from lowball fever, overcome by a product's too-good-to-be-true price'
THE E-VENGER

Had you scrolled down the bid page, you would have seen that ground shipping—by the carrier of uBid's choosing—is $6.99 per order *plus 99 cents per pound*, and that your monitor, according to uBid, weighs "approximately 35 pounds," bringing your shipping total to $41.64. There's even a tiny postscript: "This item is heavy. Please note your total shipping amount." Of course, it would have been more helpful if uBid had bothered to tally that sum for you instead of making you whip out your calculator, but that might result in an epidemic of abandoned shopping carts.

"Not being up-front about shipping costs is clearly a deceptive practice," says Rob Leathern, an analyst at Jupiter Media Metrix, "and a recipe for consumer disaster." But uBid claims that it *is* up-front, and has even added a pop-up window to make sure you understand what goes into its shipping fees.

Its explanation: The fee includes handling, which is meant to "protect our customers and cover insurance, repackaging, distribution, and administrative [that is, credit card] processing," says spokeswoman Denise Mancini. Protect you from what—getting a good deal? Or uBid's fuzzy math? Using the **UPS Quick Cost Calculator [ups.com]**, it's easy to check what it costs to ship a 35-pound package to you from uBid's warehouse in Romeoville, Illinois, by UPS Ground—a whopping $11.44. By FedEx Ground it's only $8.76—and that's before any corporate discount.

The folks at uBid do admit that you were charged too much, and they have agreed that you are owed a refund—which they claim is all of $1.98. Disputing the charge at this time would be difficult since you paid by debit card and did receive the merchandise on time. In the future, shop around first, using a price-comparison engine such as **PriceGrabber.com**, which tells you not only the lowest price but also the tax and shipping.

MEAL THICKET

Q When I recently tried to use one of my Cityspree gift certificates to pay for a meal, the restaurant refused it, saying the company had gone bankrupt. I've tried to contact the firm by e-mail and phone, but no response so far.

GAIL PAULUS
Duluth, Georgia

A Cityspree did file for Chapter 11. However, bankruptcy protection does not mean "out of business." Its new owner, **Restaurant.com**, is trying to convince member establishments to honor the outstanding certificates. According to chief financial officer Steve Savad, many of the restaurants were very unhappy with the way Cityspree operated. "We are assuring them that Restaurant.com is looking to incorporate the good components and rectify the bad," Savad says.

If a restaurant refuses to honor your Cityspree chit, apply for a refund by sending the documents or photocopies along with a detailed letter to Cityspree, Attention: Refunds, P.O. Box 361907, Birmingham, AL 35236. Be advised that although you are automatically considered a creditor of the company, it's up to the courts to determine who gets paid, and when. If you paid by credit card, you can also try to get a refund through the credit card company.

In October's "Debt Be Not Proud," reader Harain was identified as a victim of a credit repair site. In fact he's only received spam from such sites.

Ask E-venger for help at www.yil.com/evenger, or by e-mail: evenger@ziffdavis.com.

CHARITY CHECK

Before making any charitable donations, first make sure that the money's going to a good cause. Check out the Better Business Bureau's Give.org and GuideStar [guidestar.org], a national database of nonprofits.

Club Paradise

It's cold outside. You've ordered some DVDs online, and that wireless Ethernet connection for the laptop just arrived. There's never been a better time to hibernate. Pull up a handsome leather ❮1❯ **COACH BLEECKER CLUB CHAIR**, $2,388 [coach.com]. Pair it with a Navajo-inspired ❮2❯ **WOOLRICH FRONTIER THROW**, $85 [woolrich.com] and spark up the fireplace. A ❮3❯ **SALVIATI SHOT GLASS**, $100 for a set of six from **eLuxury** [eluxury.com], filled with chilled ❮4❯ **VOX VODKA**, $25 from **Sherry-Lehmann** [sherry-lehmann.com], makes excellent company, especially when an ❮5❯ **ARMANI CASA SILVER-PLATED CARAFE**, $245, does the pouring from atop a ❮6❯ **MATCHING SERVING TRAY**, $275 [armanicasa.com]. Too bad the only butler at your beck and call is Ask Jeeves.

MEAGHAN O'NEILL

PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVIES+STARR

STYLED BY NEAL T. BOULTON

Clockwise, from top left: Linden Davio [neimanmarcus.com]; Movado Chrome Monument [neimanmarcus.com]; Baccarat Equinoxe [eluxury.com]; Umbra Omega [www.umbra.com]

All in the Timing

Q » I'm bored with my home decor, but I don't have the time or cash for an overhaul. Where can I get some suggestions online for a new look?

A » Relax. There's no need to start from scratch or break the bank. Think of each room as a classic outfit in need of updating. The message boards at **Homestore.com** are a great practical resource. You'll find areas such as Inexpensive Decorating, filled with tips from other surfers. Also, a few new accessories—such as an eye-catching clock—can easily create a new look. Want to give the guest room a cleaner, more minimalist feeling? Try a Movado chrome tower for a sleek, contemporary effect. Or dress up the living room for a party with a crystal or mineral-glass clock; they sit majestically upon a mantel or sofa table. Trust me: Blinded by the elegance of your taste, no one will even notice that you've catered the entire brunch.

Q » We're restoring our 1850s farmhouse inside and out. Where on the Web can we learn more about painting techniques from that era?

A » Before the arrival of factory-made paints in about 1875, less uniform mixtures were often grainy and rough-textured. To replicate those characteristics with modern materials, you can visit **The Old House Web [oldhouseweb.com]** for a primer on vintage wall coverings, including an advisory on such hazards as lead-based paints. Enthusiasts on the message boards categorize their commentary by architectural era. But before you dip a single brush, read at **Old House Journal Online: Painting Historic Interiors [oldhousejournal.com/notebook/npsbriefs/brief28.shtml]**. Take advantage of these shopping resources and you'll have more time to enjoy your rejuvenated digs.

Warren Christopher has the answers. Write to askwarren@ziffdavis.com.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVIES+STARR

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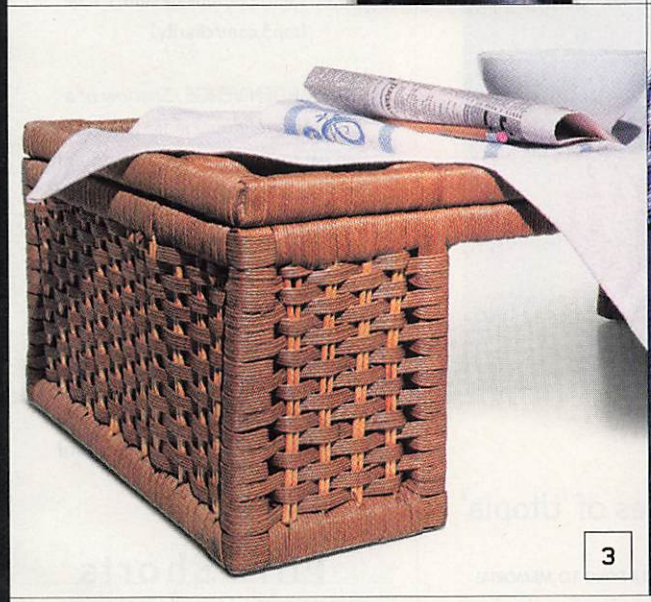
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Rest Assured

1 ›› SLIP SLIDING AWAY
The office got your e-mail: "Working from home." Casual footwear is part of any telecommute. Felted wool slippers, $28, from **J. Crew [jcrew.com]**; wool scuffs, $36, from **Eddie Bauer [eddiebauer.com]**.

2 ›› NOT YOUR DAILY GRIND
Press your way to coffee heaven with this Norpro French press, $40, at **Caffé Tucano [caffetucano.com]**; tableware by Paul Smith for Thomas Goode, $51 to $97, from **Vivre [vivre.com]**.

3 ›› TAKING IT TO THE SHEETS
No matter when you decide to awake, it's time for breakfast—in bed. Make it all the more delicious with the Breakfast in Bed tray, $40, from **The Wedding List [theweddinglist.com]**.

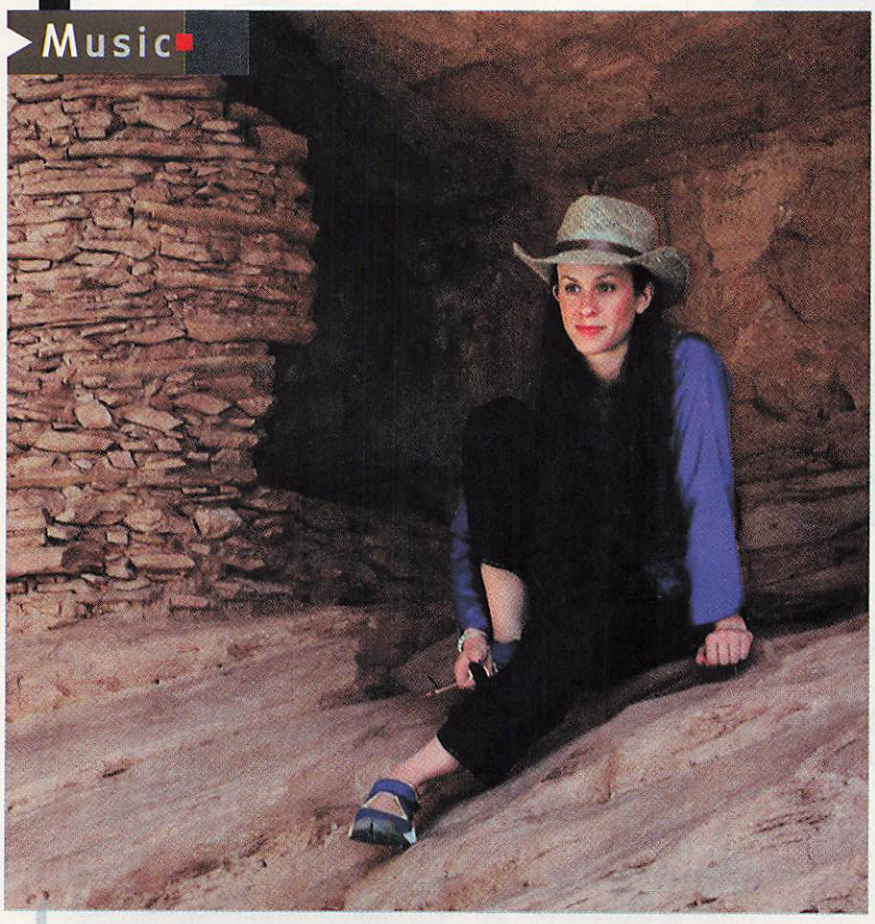
4 ›› MORNING CALL
Don't walk down the snowy driveway to fetch the morning paper. Read it online in high fashion. Calvin Klein robe, $60, and Nautica pajama top, $29.50, from **Macys.com**. **MEAGHAN O'NEILL**

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVIES+STARR

Content

what to watch, hear, read, and play online

Music



PEACE OUT

Alanis responds to 9/11 with a few minutes of 'Utopia'

FOR THE PAST FEW MONTHS, IT SEEMS MUSICIANS HAVE BEEN DESPERATE TO FIND A SONG TO MEMORIALIZE the traumas of September 11. But in the entire pop canon, what heartbroken expression of lost love or exhortation to seize the day *doesn't* seem to have been written with the tragedies in mind? While some singers grope for an anthem, Alanis Morissette (above) appears to have a ready-made elegy in "Utopia," a track from her February album, *Under Rug Swept*. With the track, available free at Maverick Records' official Web site, Morissette offers hope for a better future: "We would share and listen and support and welcome/Be propelled by passion not invest in outcomes." Beseeching the kind of charity that came true in the wake of terror, the song now urges us to hold that thought in times of peace. Is that too utopian to ask? **[maverick.com/alanis]** **ADAM McGOVERN**

CHECK IT OUT GO TO YIL.COM/CRITICS FOR MORE INFO

Music Shorts

INDEPENDENT ARTISTS COALITION, "Take My Hand (A Better World)" Here's a genuinely unique 9/11 charity track, one that was created by 22 indie artists in eight countries. The song's sentimental melody may not be for everybody, but its goodwill is. The ability to execute this type of project using such far-flung participants underscores the Web's value as a rapid-response medium. Woven into a cohesive whole, the song achieves a humility sadly lacking in many benefit projects and patriotic gestures. **A.M.** ★★★ **[mp3.com/charity]**

THE GARDEN VERGE, *Shadow of a Habit* This reflective indie-folk duo's fine ear for stark ballads and mournful harmonies is comfortingly straight-from-the-heart—and goes well beyond the obligatory anguish common to the coffeehouse menu. On this debut album, their acoustic pickin' and plunkin' admirably avoids the lure of studio bloat; download the songs or be a patron of the arts and order the CD. **A.M.** ★★★½ **[gardenverge.com]**

Film Shorts

REFLEXUS Ever wonder what would happen if *Rear Window* took place in *The Twilight Zone*? *Reflexus* is a classy, elegant slice of neo-noir about voyeurism turned on its head. A Peeping Tom watches his pretty neighbor from the balcony of his apartment, only to witness a violent act. But when he comes to her rescue, he makes a startling discovery about her...and

MON **SOUTHERN FOOD CHAT:** 9:30 P.M. DEEP-FRIED ADVICE **[SOUTHERNFOOD.ABOUT.COM/MPCHAT.HTM]**

TUE **PARANORMAL PHENOMENA:** 11 P.M. GHOSTS GALORE **[PARANORMAL.ABOUT.COM/MPCHAT.HTM]**

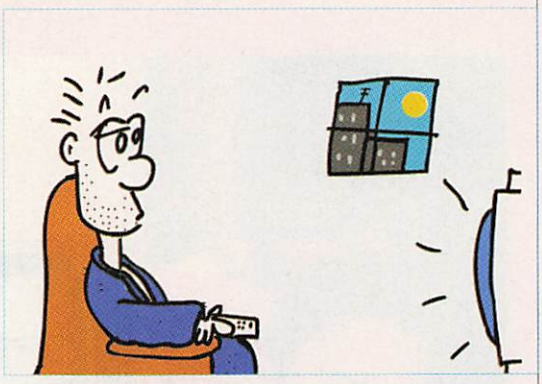
WED **PHOTOGRAPHY CHAT:** 6 P.M. POINT, SHOOT, DISCUSS **[PHOTOGRAPHY.ABOUT.COM/MPCHAT.HTM]**

HENRY DILTZ

Film

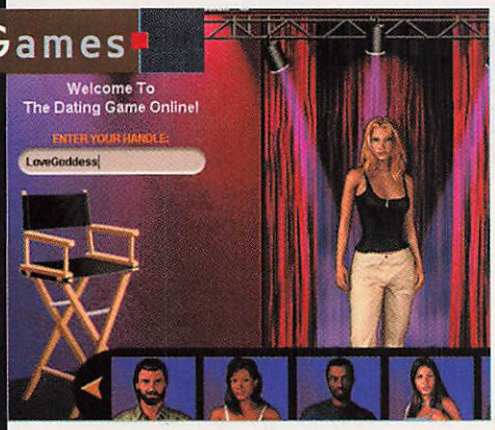
FUN WITH LAYOFFS

An animated jab at the jobless life



UNEMPLOYED DOT-COMMERS may not seem like a particularly original source of inspiration for comedy these days, but one never knows where genius will strike. Enter Odd Todd, a former New York business-development guy whose Flash cartoon "Laid Off: A Day in the Life" has turned into something of a viral phenomenon. As the title indicates, the short chronicles a day in the life of a laid-off slacker: Pringles for breakfast, thinking (and forgetting) about writing a screenplay, TV, nap, porn, Pringles for dinner, and so on. It's simply illustrated, with Odd Todd (né Todd Rosenberg) providing narration in his own hilariously exhausted voice. The result is a concise little gem about aimlessness, as heartfelt in its own way as *Dazed and Confused* or *Slacker*. Somebody give this guy a movie deal; he'll work for food. **[oddtodd.com]** **BILGE EBIRI**

Games



VIRTUAL VALENTINES?

Sony Debuts Its Dating Game Online

IF IT'S TRUE THAT 5 MILLION AMERICAN singles have turned to online matchmaking, then Sony's latest TV-to-Net conversion, Dating Game Online (for ages 18 and older), may offer more than just a passing multiplayer-gaming fix.

As with the classic TV show, potential suitors reveal their romantic tendencies by answering a series of randomly generated questions, such as: "Say something to me in another language—make it sexy, *s'il vous plaît*," or "I think hairy toes are a huge turnoff—which part of the body do you find least erotic?" Suitors can generate their own questions as well.

The contestant with the cleverest and/or most flirtatious answers ultimately wins the most heart points from the female or male chooser. The couple can then determine the next step, if any, in its online (or offline) romance. Shy would-be contestants can chat with others in the cybergreenroom or watch live shows to get a feel for the questions and answers before jumping in themselves. **[datinggame.station.sony.com]** **MARC SALTZMAN**

himself. The ensuing Möbius strip of events in which he finds himself caught is both mind-expanding and bone-jangling. Don't miss it. **M.A.J.** ★★★★ **[atomfilms.shockwave.com/af/content/atom_29]**

THEY CAME TO ATTACK US The alien saucers are invading, and a mysterious visitor from another dimension has placed the fate of the world in the hands of an unflappable slacker who's been warned not to come to work stoned again. Are we doomed? Efram Potelle and Kyle Rankin's QuickTime short is not only sly and funny, it's also an impressive example of expensive-looking F/X done on a minuscule budget. **M.A.J.** ★★★½ **[theremediproject.com/projects/issue10/newborntheycame]**

Game Shorts

ALIENS VS. PREDATOR 2 Get messy in a battle between humans and two strains of extraterrestrials in Aliens vs. Predator 2, a follow-up to the popular 1999 3-D shooter. The full game offers nearly two dozen single-player levels, but the real fun is playing online as one of 10 characters (including the nightmarish hybrid Predalien) in several game modes. Download the free demo and pick among four characters to play in one of two modes. **M.S.** ★★★½ **[avp2.sierra.com] (Sierra Studios, $49.95)**

SILENT HILL 2 James Sunderland arrives in Silent Hill after receiving a letter from his wife, who has been...uh, dead...for three years. This eerie place is crawling with odd townsfolk and bizarre beasts that appear out of the thick mist. Explore the town, solve riddles, and battle creatures in this chilling horror game. **M.S.** ★★★ **[konami.com/main/games/silenthill2] (Konami, for PlayStation 2 and Xbox only, $49.99)**

THE CONTENT COMMITTEE: MARYANN JOHANSON, ADAM McGOVERN, MARC SALTZMAN

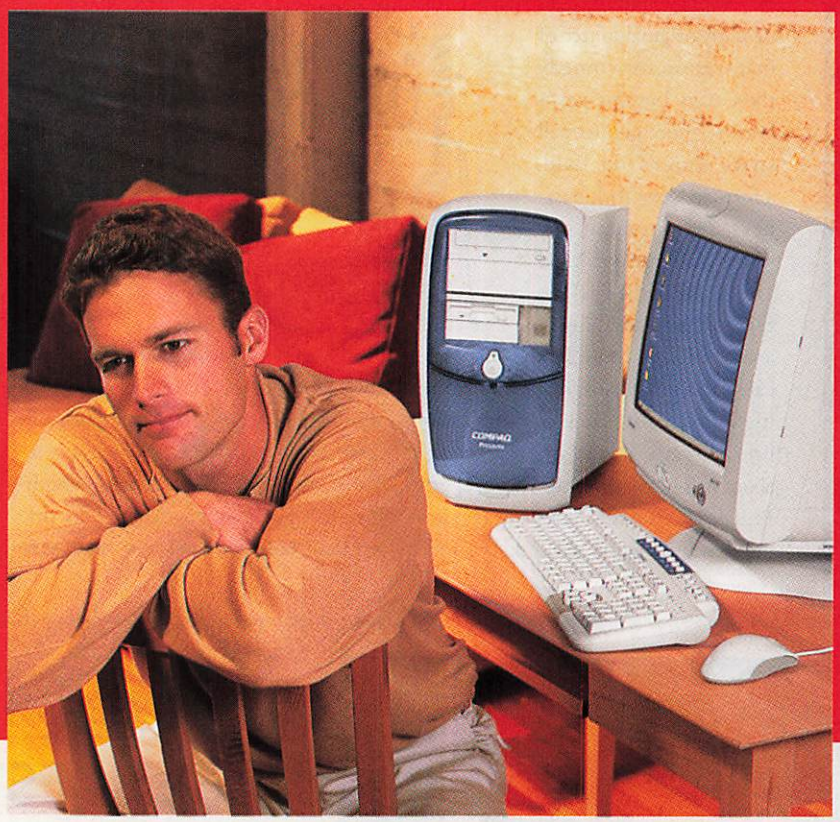
THU **EXERCISE & FITNESS CONCERNS:** 8 P.M. WALK THIS WAY **[EXERCISE.ABOUT.COM/MPCHAT.HTM]**

FRI **TEST DRIVE:** 2 P.M. AUTO INDUSTRY NEWS **[USATODAY.COM/COMMUNITY/MB/INDEX.HTM]**

SAT **DHARMA CHAT:** 11:30 P.M. CYBERSANGHA **[TALKCITY.COM/RELIGIONS/CALENDAR/CHATS/BUDDHISM.HTML]**

LAID OFF: ODD TODD; DATING GAME: SONY ONLINE ENTERTAINMENT INC.

BUILT ON A RATHER SIMPLE, INNOVATIVE IDEA.



YOURS.

What's your idea of the perfect PC? Let us know and we'll build it for you. Hungry for power? Choose a fast Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor. Got a hidden talent? Get a CD-RW drive and release your first CD. Or get a DVD-R/RW & CD-RW combo drive and produce and share your own movies. Just call and order one of these Compaq Presario PCs direct from Compaq today. Nothing could be simpler.

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Digital Pro

Presario 8000T-2.2

$1699‡

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16X DVD-ROM Drive[2]
24X CD-RW Drive[3]
56K ITU V.90 Modem[4]
Integrated 10/100 Network Interface Card
Soundmax II Digital Audio
JBL Platinum Speakers with Digital Audio Port
64 MB SDR nVidia GeForce2 MX200 with TV-Out
Compaq CV735 17" Monitor (16.0" VIA)
Six Months of AOL Internet Access Included[5]

Personalize by choosing:
512 MB SyncDRAM: Add $100
Compaq CV935 19" Monitor (18.0" VIA): Add $140

Power User

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cool tools

ultimate accessories for the digital life

PLAY SILENT, PLAY DEEP

First came the violin, and then came the cello. Now the **Yamaha Silent Bass** completes the coolest-looking string section around. This sleek instrument lets musicians practice in private: By donning headphones, they can hear themselves without any competing external sounds. When it's time to perform, the bass works just like a wooden one—but with detachable parts, it's one heck of a lot easier to transport. **$3,995 [yamaha.com/band]**

DRIVE TIME

A digital lifestyle requires lots of digital storage, but managing files is no picnic when you're on the move. Unless you're using the battery-powered **Terapin Mine.** This 7-by-3-inch baby has all the storage and input-output of a PC—the only thing missing is the PC itself. Take the 10-gigabyte device with you on vacation and store thousands of digital photos on it, as you snap them. Bring along hundreds of MP3 files and load up your player via the USB port. Use the Ethernet port to connect to the Net and back everything up to your online Terapin storage bin. Leave the laptop at home. **$599 [goterapin.com]**

TEEN DREAM

It may look like an overequipped Game Boy, but the **Nokia 5510** is actually a cell phone that lets teenagers do two of their favorite things at the same time: chat with friends and listen to music. Integrated into the phone is a music player and recorder that not only plays MP3 files but also captures two hours (64MB) of music from any source (radio, CD player, PC) via its line-in port. Included software helps manage the tunes, and there's also a built-in FM radio. Attention-addled kids can keep the music going while they type out instant messages or play the five included games. **Price not yet determined [nokia.com/phones/5510]**

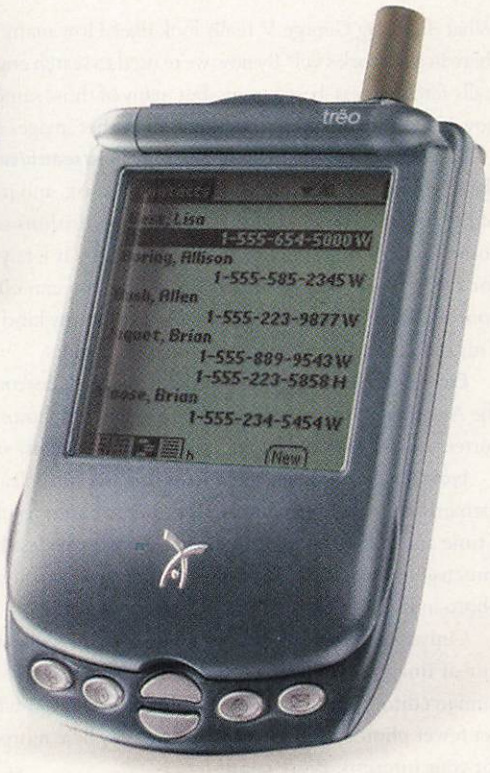
by don willmott

GRAB HOLD OF YOUR GAMES

The perfect game controller may forever remain out of reach, but designers keep busy trying to create it. Thrustmaster's **FireStorm Upad** for the PlayStation and PS2 (an Xbox model is also available) has two motors, two joysticks, an eight-way directional pad, and eight programmable buttons. The motors generate vibration effects when you crash your virtual car or shoot your deadly bazooka...fun for the whole family. **$25 [thrustmaster.com]**

WEB CAM IN A FLASH

Why not take your Web cam out for a walk? When you're feeling sedentary, **Creative Labs' PC-CAM 300** sits on top of your system, handily doing its normal Web cam duty. But when you're ready to go mobile, it's a flash-equipped digital still camera capable of storing 128 low-resolution images, 75 seconds of video with sound, or 34 minutes of voice recording in its 8MB memory. An LCD screen on the back keeps count of your photos and shows you how much battery life is left, while the shutter-snapping sound effects will give you a chuckle. **$130 [creative.com]**



A CURE FOR GADGET CREEP

How about this for a combination: cell phone, wireless e-mailer, text-message sender, Web browser, and Palm-based PDA all in one. The **Handspring Treo** crams all of that into a device the size of a large cell phone and weighs just 5.4 ounces. Click on the phone book to dial a phone number. Use the speaker phone so you can take notes while you talk. Click on an e-mail address and dash off a short note. Plus, unlike some other combo PDA phones, the Treo lets you do everything with one hand, an important consideration if you're dashing down the street with a triple latte and a newspaper. Coming later this year: a $599 model with a color screen. **$399 [handspring.com]**

find it

SEARCH ENGINES ARE GETTING A LITTLE CLOSER TO PICTURE-PERFECT

What did King George V really look like? How many colors are there in a peacock's tail? By now we're used to search engines magically fetching text-based items, but many of those same tools can now be used to dig up photographs and other images as well.

AltaVista: Image Search [altavista.com/sites/search/simage] was the first major search engine to tackle this task, and it's still one of the best, even if its pattern-matching algorithms sometimes come up with unintentionally funny results. It lets you search for color, black-and-white, or both; and you can either limit your search to photos or put out the call for any kind of image. Our search for Björk (right) yielded 610 results.

Excite: Precision Search [search.excite.com] includes content from the Associated Press to make it easy to search for photos related to current events. How does it do on the Björk test? Eighty-one results.

Lycos Multimedia [multimedia.lycos.com] recently cleaned up its formerly cluttered search tools. It presents photo results nine at a time and, like most other search engines, provides the photo's dimensions. It also links back to the source so that you can see the photo in its original context. Björk count: 2,225.

Only one company, **Ditto.com**, has tried to make a business out of image searching. Unlike other engines, this one uses human editors to screen its results for relevance. You'll typically get fewer photos here, but chances are they'll be more on target for your interests. Björk count: 122.

When **Google [google.com]** added new buttons to its spartan search page last fall, one such link was labeled Images. The site claims to have indexed 250 million images, and users can switch on the mature-content filter if they want to avoid being exposed to anything offensive. This one doesn't disappoint on the Björk test: The search engine turns up a whopping 9,180 images. But before you copy and paste, remember that many images are copyrighted. It's okay to look, but not always okay to touch. **DON WILLMOTT**

BJÖRK (CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT): JUSTIN CASE, MARC BAPTISTE, STEPHANIE PFRIENDER, JUSTIN CASE, ALL CORBIS

quick tips

REPEAT PERFORMANCE

If you find yourself typing the same directions, résumés, or invitations over and over again, try storing these blocks of text in the IQmunicator on **BlinkingCursor [blinkingcursor.com]**. With a single click, you can save a chunk of text you've typed. Then, when you want to use it again, another click pastes it into nearly any PC application, including e-mail, word-processing, and instant-messaging windows. IQmunicator is free to try for 60 days and $19.95 to buy.

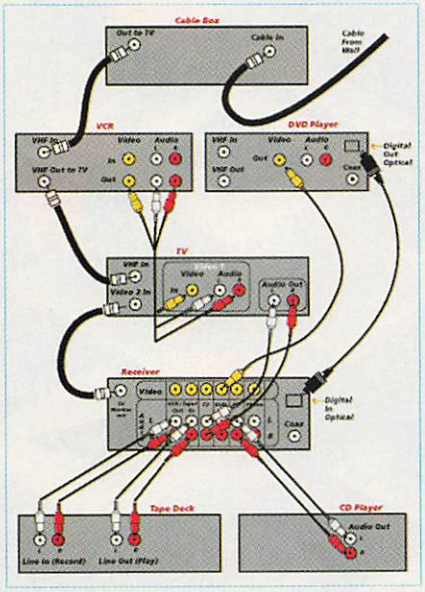
.COM CLEAN

Instead of typing out a site's entire Web address in Microsoft Internet Explorer, simply enter the body of the URL. For example, type *yil* instead of *www.yil.com*. Then hit [Ctrl + Enter]. The browser will automatically add *www.* to the beginning and *.com* to the end of the address. Netscape Navigator users, however, are out of luck.

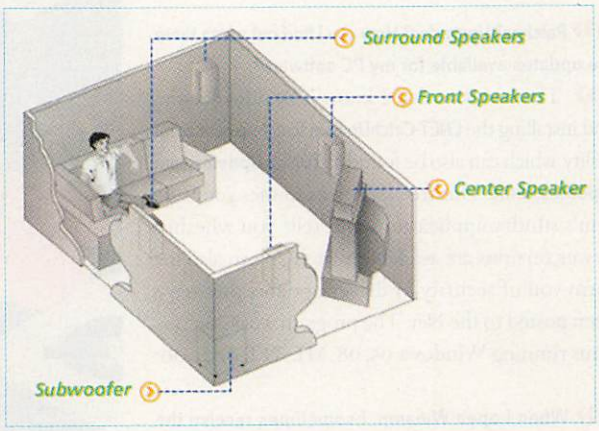
PRO TOURS

Lost online? Need a push in the right direction? Get some guidance from **Jeeves' Tours [etour.com]**. This free service directs you to specific sites in such categories as Travel, Music, and Employment. One caveat: While editors select the majority of the service's links, some advertisers pay Jeeves for preferential placement.

YOU'VE COLLECTED 40GB OF MP3 FILES. HERE'S HOW TO LISTEN TO THEM LIKE AN AUDIOPHILE



LISTEN UP Sites such as **Hifi.com** show you how to get the most out of your audio equipment.



.01 get what you need

Forget about 5.1-channel Dolby Digital, Super Audio CD, or Surround Sound. Right now, the maturest music technology is a component stereo that you connect to your PC with a pair of RCA cables. A separate amp, pre-amp, and single-play CD unit will deliver maximum quality, and some in the audio community still prefer tube gear to solid-state. A minimally credible system will set you back at least a grand.

.02 know the territory

True audiophiles distinguish between popular brands from superstores and the "good stuff" sold both by audio boutiques and over the Internet. To learn more, start with **Rec.audio: FAQ [www.unik.no/~robert/hifi/faq]**. It covers the basics—including how to listen critically to speakers—and has a good overview of audio publications. Then visit **www.AudioReview.com**, **AudioWeb [audioweb.com]**, and **eCoustics.com**. Reviews and products that are sortable by price will guide your choices. **AudioAsylum [audioasylum.com]** is where you'll find serious geeks, who treasure their $100-per-foot speaker cables and $10,000 speakers, chatting on message boards. They're usually delighted to flex their expertise muscles for beginners. **Hifi.com** will tutor you on connections and setup.

.03 swap till you drop

Many audiophiles trade and upgrade equipment about as often as you change TV channels. There's a huge secondary Internet market for lightly used, high-quality components. Once you know what you want, check out **eBay [ebay.com]** as well as such specialty sites as **Audiogon [audiogon.com]**, which lists a fair amount of dealer overstock.

.04 polish the sound

Even with a decent system, MP3s sound a bit anemic compared with CDs. To combat this, double the bit rate from the usual 128Kbps to 256Kbps when ripping. Alternately, switch to Microsoft's Windows Media Audio (WMA) format, which is fine at 128Kbps. If you pick up lots of noise and distortion, it's probably your sound card. Go for the new low-noise Audigy from **Sound Blaster [soundblaster.com]** for $100 or the highly regarded Santa Cruz from **Voyetra Turtle Beach [voyetra.com]** for $80. Also check out Voyetra's $300 Turtle Beach AudioTron, a gizmo that can play MP3s, directly from your PC, anywhere in your home. **LOU DOLINAR**

webuser surf guru

UPGRADE ONLINE FOR FREE; CLEAN UP YOUR FILTHY SYSTEM!

Q» Patches? Upgrades? How can I find out when there are updates available for my PC software?

A» The best way that I know is by downloading and installing the **CNET CatchUp.com [catchup.cnet.com]** utility, which can also be found at **ZDNet: Updates.com [updates.com]**. This free service examines your system's sundry applications and tells you whether newer versions are available. CatchUp can also inform you of security or driver updates that have been posted to the Net. The program works on systems running Windows 95, 98, ME, NT, or 2000.

Q» When I open Winamp, I sometimes receive the message, "Device is already in use." What's wrong?

A» Your system probably has an old sound card that can't play more than one sound at a time. If this is the case, then the card can't simultaneously play MP3 tunes and, say, sound effects in a Shockwave movie (which could still be using your sound card even if it's not making noise). In Winamp, you can generally get around this problem by fiddling with the program's audio preferences, which are accessible by typing [Ctrl + P]. Under the heading Plug-ins, click Output and then choose Nullsoft DirectSound.

Q» I like to eat Chee-tos while I surf. The result is a keyboard full of gunk. What's the safest way to clean it up?

A» I don't know what the specific protocol is for cleaning up that cheesy residue, but I use an air duster (compressed air) to spray food particles away from my keyboard. You'll find dozens of computer cleaning accessories at **CompUSA.com** by clicking to Accessories: Cleaning Supplies. (I'm always amazed that a can of air can cost so much.) For details on how to clean up your system's mouse, monitor, and PC chassis, I recommend you read the tutorial at **Learn2.com: Learn2 Clean Your Computer [learn2.com/05/0554/0554.asp]**.

Q» RealPlayer has placed an annoying icon in my system tray. Any ideas on how to get rid of it?

A» You'd think that downloads and utilities would show a little respect when they arrive on your PC. Sadly, that's not always the case. Like many instant-messaging clients and other media players, RealPlayer has the bad habit of taking advantage of your hospitality and spreading out all over your desktop. Here's how to clean up a little. Open RealPlayer, click the View menu, and choose Settings. This will launch the Preferences window. Click the General tab and press the Settings button. Uncheck the Enable StartCenter option and click OK. If you want to disable this feature in RealJukebox as well, click the Tools menu and choose Preferences. In the Preferences window, click the General tab and uncheck Enable StartCenter.

EDDIE BOWEN/WWW.COSMO7.COM

aol watch

Groups@AOL [groups.aol.com] lets members create fun and interactive online communities in which messages, digital photos, and event listings can be swapped among friends, family members, and colleagues. To create your own Group, click the Mail menu and choose Address Book to launch the Address Book window. From there, click on the New Group button, which launches a Manage Group window. Create a name for your group and add friends to it from your address book. Before you're finished, tell AOL whether you want to share this group with the public or keep it limited to the folks you select.

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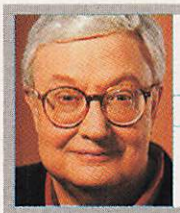


YOU, TOO, CAN BE A DVD MOVIE CRITIC

I have an idea for a new kind of marriage between film criticism and the Web: Do-it-yourself movie commentary tracks.

The commentaries on DVDs are one of their most popular features, turning viewers into experts who end up knowing almost as much about a movie as its makers. Commentaries have been recorded by directors, actors, editors, cinematographers, producers, critics, and even impostors ("Kenneth Loring," who does the commentary on *Blood Simple,* is a practical joke by the Coen brothers). Some of these individuals are good; some, fair. Some seem to be watching the movie while killing a six-pack. The tracks all have one thing in common: They're inside jobs.

I'd love to hear a commentary track by someone who hates a movie, ripping it to shreds. Or a track by an expert who disagrees with the facts in a film. Or a track by someone with a moral or philosophical argument to make. Or even a *Wayne's World*–style track from dudes down in the basement who think *The Mummy Returns* is way cool.

Well, this is one case in which freedom of the press doesn't belong only to the person who owns one. Although movies are copyrighted and pirating is a crime, as we all know from endless FBI warnings, there is no legal reason why outsiders can't record a commentary track about any movie ever made. It's no more illegal than talking in a theater, and a lot less annoying.

There is no legal reason why outsiders can't record a commentary track about any movie. DVD and MP3 technologies make it simple

DVD and MP3 technologies make it simple. With a microphone hooked up to your computer, you can easily record your voice to an MP3 file. Just synchronize your track with the first frame of the studio logo and talk during the whole movie. Better yet, create multiple files synced to the first frame of every chapter stop, so people can start in the middle if they want to hear your comments on a particular scene (and you don't have to rerecord the whole thing if you screw up an hour into the movie). Once done, you would upload your insights to a DVD Web site, which would offer them to the public. (Since voice can be recorded at a much lower bit rate than music, the file sizes should be quite modest.) At the other end, those interested in your commentary would play it back over their computer or on an MP3 player, with the real movie playing in the background.

This idea intrigues me because I know there are critics and fans on the Web who have a special relationship to movies that even a film's makers can't duplicate. I'm curious, for example, about the depth of the fanaticism for the martial arts and *anime* genres. I can understand why *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* and *Princess Mononoke* are great, but it might be enlightening to listen to a running commentary about *Revenge of the Drunken Master* or the Sailor Moon series. I would also like to hear a psychologist analyzing *Memento*, a Vietnam combat veteran talking about *Platoon*, or Harry Knowles taking us one shot at a time through *The Giant Gila Monster,* one of the neglected classics he has resurrected for his annual birthday Butt-Numb-a-Thon.

If the approach caught on, treasures might result. I received, for example, a letter from Ronan O'Casey, the actor who played the dead body in Michelangelo Antonioni's *Blowup.* He reveals that his character originally had a name and dialogue, and was part of a plot that led up to and followed from his murder. By eliminating that plot in the editing room, Antonioni turned his film into a brilliant meditation on perception: It seems to a photographer (David Hemmings) that the body was there; it can be seen in his photographs, and then it disappears. The commentary by O'Casey might talk about shreds of action and dialogue that remain in the movie as clues to the missing scenes. And what about a movie where the disgruntled cast and crew members were fed up after working with a megalomaniac director? What if they got even?

"We've all got this running DVD commentary in our minds, we actors, watching the movies we've made," Faye Dunaway said at October's Chicago International Film Festival. For goodness' sake, let's hear it, already. ■

HEAR EBERT'S COMMENTARY ON HITCHCOCK'S *NOTORIOUS* AT YIL.COM/NOTORIOUS

PAUL ELLEDGE

ANGELA GUNN

ALL'S FAIR IN LOVE AND E-MAIL

Q: I'm on an e-mail discussion list at work and sent a private note to another participant in the middle of the thread. Apparently he thought he was making a great point in response (at my expense!), because he copied his answer to my note to everyone in the discussion plus a few people who hadn't been involved before. I'm seething. Was that fair?

A: Just as every large in-person meeting tends to include a number of whispered asides between pairs of coworkers, a discussion list often spins out a number of short-term, private threads. And thank heaven for that—most online discussions are already far too tedious and talky.

There are no hard-and-fast "rules" in private threads—they may involve consensus building, clarification, conspiracy, venting of steam, or just good old-fashioned name-calling. You need to use good judgment, though, about the reliability of your correspondent. Is this the sort of person who blurts out anything that happens to be in his head? Is he the sort of person you couldn't trust to keep a whispered aside whispery?

There are no hard 'rules' in private threads—but use judgment. Is your correspondent the sort of person you couldn't trust to keep a whispered aside whispery?

If you feel that a confidence might be betrayed in a work situation, you should evaluate who might be harmed by that betrayal. (Let's assume you're not stupid enough to vent catty remarks about a third participant in an e-mail, let alone to a loose-lipped colleague.) Would confidential information be endangered? Are you bringing up issues that don't directly involve the conversation at hand? Do you suspect that your comment may be the conversational equivalent of raw meat in the pit-bull pen? In these cases, you're better off starting this "side conversation" as an entirely separate e-mail exchange so that your comment, however well intentioned, doesn't provide proximate cause for a serious ethical breach on the part of Chatty Cathy (in which case you can consider yourself an accessory before the fact). Better yet, schedule face time—it's easier to contain, and it doesn't leave a forwardable record.

So was it "fair"? Probably not, and I'm sorry you work with someone so unpleasant—though probably not as sorry as your coworkers, who had to see a private affair go public.

Q: I was visiting someone else's Web site and I found a link that's broken. Should I e-mail the site owner and let him know?

A: It's nice to know there are Good Samaritans online, but your ethical responsibilities in this situation are remarkably few. Yes, if you feel a friendly note (a *friendly* note—no harangues) will alert the Web keeper to something amiss, find his address on the site and send word describing what you saw and how you found it. Very kind of you to help keep the Net shipshape, by the way. However, you're certainly not required to do so; this isn't the equivalent of warning someone that his house is on fire.

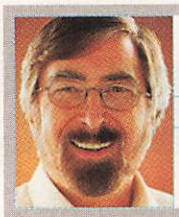
And, of course, there are always exceptions. If you happen to find a security break on a Web site—a biff that might, for instance, expose credit card numbers or otherwise endanger sensitive information—that *is* a genuinely dangerous situation and someone needs to know. However, *do not* investigate on your own, and *do not* attempt to exploit the security hole. Last year, a "Samaritan" in Oklahoma went from casual exploration to planning theft of intellectual property, and ended up pleading guilty to a charge of breaking and entering. Tell the site owner right away. Then back off.

The ethical person's instinct here might be to warn anyone else whose information might be endangered as well. However, your responsibility is simply to warn the site owner. Once he knows about it, it's on him to make things right. Your work here is done.

Note to the faithful: Where there are ethics there is also, occasionally, regret. For a great read on the should've-could've-would'ves of your fellow Net citizens, check out Barry Cadish's *Damn! Reflections on Life's Biggest Regrets*, at **RegretsOnly.com.** ■

Comments? angela_gunn@ziffdavis.com

JAY GULLIXSON



ROBERT SCHEER

PRIVACY WATCH

A SENATOR'S LONELY BATTLE FOR PRIVACY

There aren't many heroes in the U.S. Senate, and in the months following September 11, Russ Feingold (D-Wis.) has stood just about alone. He cast the single negative vote in the Senate against passage of the antiterrorism bill, which was pushed through Congress with unseemly haste and signed into law by the president. I believe we will rue the day our government so cavalierly surrendered basic rights and put the freedom of the Internet in jeopardy. When that time comes, I believe we will come to respect Feingold all the more for his vote.

For that reason, in this column I'm declaring him the winner of the Estes Kefauver award. Estes who? To those of you too young to remember, old Estes was a true American hero when it came to defending personal freedom.

Fifty years ago, at the height of the Korean War against Asian communism, Kefauver, a down-home senator from Tennessee who liked to campaign in his trademark coonskin hat, walked onto the floor of the U.S. Senate while a very important vote was going on. He asked his aide what was up and was told it was the communist control bill, which would make it a crime to be a communist sympathizer. Not that there were many, but Congress was hell-bent on finding some. By this point, Joe McCarthy had perfected the art of the modern witch-hunt, and everyone was eager to humor him.

Everyone, that is, except Kefauver, who had conducted investigations of the Mafia, the drug trade, and the auto industry. He was not about to be cowed by the pseudopatriotic passions of the moment. He had actually bothered to read the bill and was shocked to discover that it was about to be passed, without debate, by a unanimous bipartisan majority. He cast the sole No vote, saying, "It just didn't smell right to me." Later the Supreme Court agreed and declared the law unconstitutional. Today Kefauver is remembered as a man of courage and vision during a time of political hysteria.

Feingold, as we know from the long battle to pass the McCain-Feingold-Cochran campaign reform bill, is also willing to fight lonely battles and tussle with special interests. Like Kefauver, Feingold had the guts to cast the lone vote when the mood of the country made it look like political suicide. Unsupported by his fellow lawmakers, Feingold provided a devastating analysis of what was dangerously wrong about a bill whose assault on our rights had little, if anything, to do with combating terrorism.

Nowhere is that more apparent than in the bill's purported attempt to stop computer crime. The provision allows law enforcement to monitor a computer user without a court order, and without notifying him, as long as the computer's owner has given permission (as in library, school, or cybercafé situations). On October 25, Feingold rose in the Senate and warned that the provisions as drafted in the Senate bill "might permit an employer to give permission to the police to monitor the e-mails of an employee who has used her computer at work to shop for Christmas gifts. Or someone who uses a computer at a library or at school and happens to go to a gambling or pornography site...might also be subjected to government surveillance—without probable cause and without any time limit. With this one provision, Fourth Amendment protections are potentially eliminated for a broad spectrum of electronic communications."

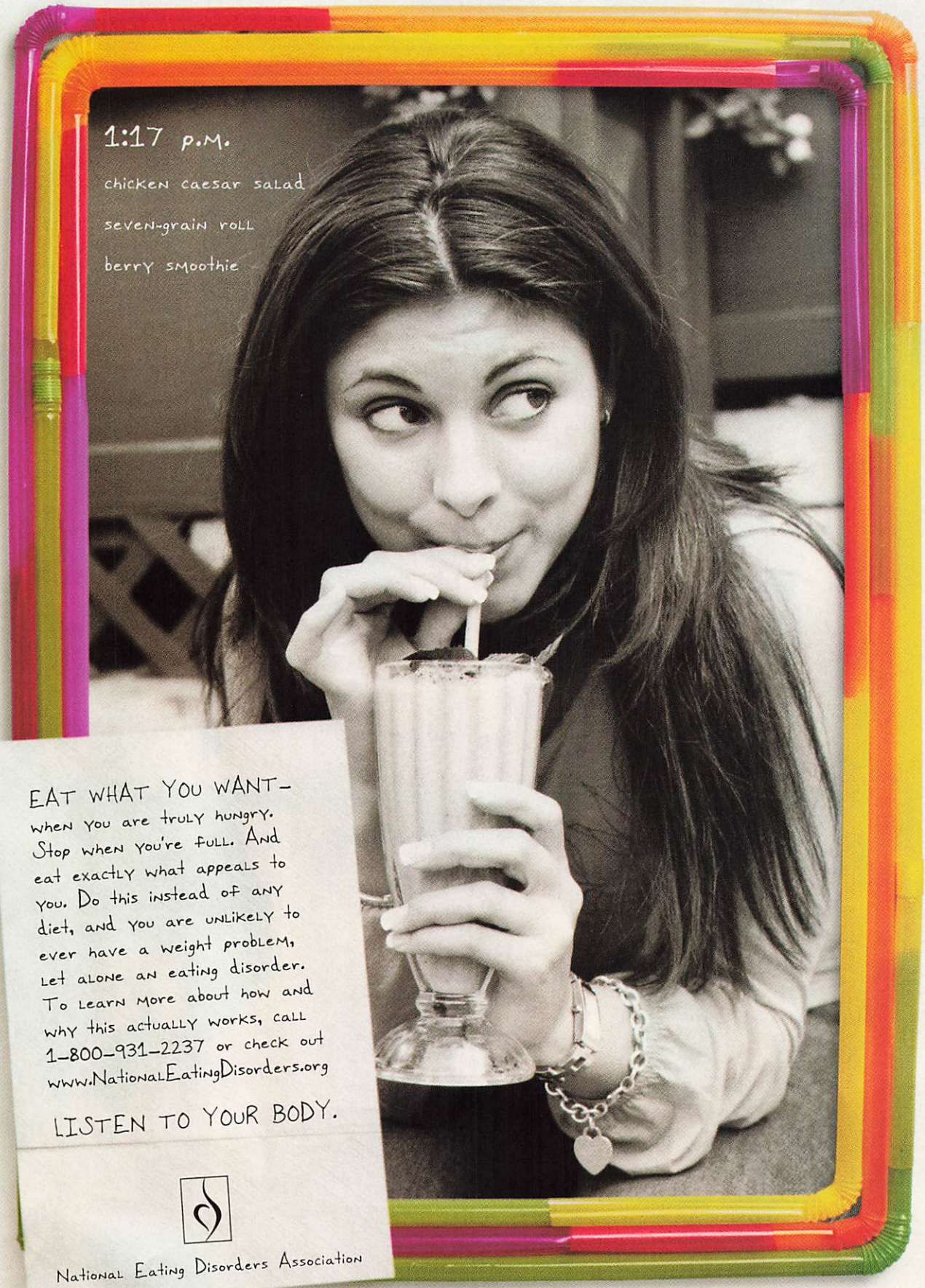
'With this one provision, Fourth Amendment protections are potentially eliminated for a broad spectrum of electronic communications'

In a subsequent interview with *Y-Life*, Feingold explained that what especially troubled him was the fact that "many Americans do not own their own computers and use computers in libraries, schools, or at work to communicate. This bill essentially says that they have no expectation of privacy in those communications."

The war-on-terrorism rhetoric has also been used in this bill to vastly expand the government's right to invade the privacy of your financial and personal CONTINUED ON PAGE 92

Aseem Batra [aseembatra@hotmail.com] contributed to this column.

BLAKE LITTLE



jamie-lynn sigler for N.E.D.A. © 2001

You can log on to thousands of health sites, some of which can save your life. Here, in *Y-Life*'s special examination, is how to make sense of them

HEAL THYSELF

TRUST IS A WORD YOU WILL SEE A LOT IN THE PAGES THAT follow. For the more than 65 million Americans who have consulted the Internet for a health or medical concern, trusting what they read online has never mattered more.

"Health care affects everyone," says Gary Galati of eMarketer, an Internet research group that recently released a 138-page e-health status report. "Not all people are sports fans, music aficionados, or politicos. But everyone has been ill." And we're turning to the Net.

Indeed, a just-released survey from the Pew Internet & American Life Project reveals that among surfers who use the Net for health or medical information, 93 percent of those people seek information on a specific illness or condition. Yet only 23 percent of those surfers indicated they were always able to find the facts they wanted. While tens of thousands of sites are devoted to health, those high numbers are more of a liability than a boon if you don't know how to navigate sites, let alone figure out which ones are trying to take you for a ride. "The good news is that there's so much information," says Sreenath Sreenivasan, a new-media professor at Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism. "The bad news is that there's so much information."

But while the Web has its share of quacks hawking miracle cures, salesmen masquerading as cancer survivors in chatrooms, and mass e-mailings spreading nonsensical health rumors, the Internet is also the single most effective disseminator of health knowledge in history. Consumers are getting smarter at evaluating sources online, while government and industry leaders are getting tougher about setting ground rules for running an Internet health business.

Whether you're searching for the latest cancer research or a great deal on multivitamins, it's important to empower yourself with information while using this miracle of the modern age. In this, our most comprehensive examination of health online, we've given you the tools to do just that.

Photographed by Jeff Stephens

GO TO: HEALTH

A plunge into the wide, wired world of wellness, from checking stress to staying fit

I thought I was pretty health conscious. I avoid deep-fried foods and red meat. I like vegetables and tofu. I check the fat and fiber content of foods. I exercise when I can, even if that just means pushing the baby stroller extra fast. I mean, I'm generally taking care of myself. Or so I thought. Until my body and I met...in Kauai.

I was there for my parents' big 40th-anniversary bash—full of family, fun, and food. In my family, I'm actually the least health-obsessed member. As I sat through the nightly ritual of cross-examining the waiter—"Did you say the mahimahi was sautéed in butter or olive oil?"—I wanted to shout, "Live a little!" But a smaller voice inside me couldn't help but wonder if maybe I should live a little *less*. I vowed that on my return to the mainland I would pursue daily wellness. Given how little time I have to spare, I needed that Holy Grail every health guru claims doesn't exist—a shortcut to wellness. I figured the Web would be my best bet.

But where to start? I turned to the news-packed **Medscape Health for Consumers [medscapehealth.com]** so that the next time I dined with the clan, I could chime in with a factoid about nutrition, health, or the mind-body connection. This addictive site told me everything I didn't know, and then some. I was able to call my parents to say, "Hi, Mom, guess what? Eating oatmeal helps keep your arteries open. What's new with you?" We're talking serious conversation starters here.

Of course, just knowing the latest health news doesn't do much for your abs. I needed to take action. First, my baseline. To determine how healthy I am now, I turned to the **MayoClinic.com**. According to the site's Personal Health Scorecard, the news wasn't as bad as I expected. After answering questions about my age, weight, eating preferences, and seat-belt-wearing habits, I learned that my health is quite good, save for two key areas: I should reduce stress and exercise more.

These results didn't so much surprise me as motivate me to make changes. And I found a near-ideal change enabler in **Asimba [asimba.com]**, which offers personalized fitness regimens plus inter-

BY SHARON EPEL

active tools that make getting in shape seem easy (appealing, even).

The next frontier in my journey to wellness was food. Although my weight does fall into a healthy range for my height, many online calculators—and my mirror—agree: I could stand to lose a few pounds. **FoodFit.com** seemed promising. When I confessed my eating habits and exercise preferences using FoodFit's clever Profile tool, it gave me a regime so doable I felt positively giddy. If I followed its recommendations, I could drop those pounds in about a month and still enjoy the occasional pint of Häagen-Dazs. Where Asimba promised to help me reach exercise goals, FoodFit took the kitchen beat, offering personalized recipes as well as friendly e-mail check-ins.

Perhaps dreaming of what I would soon look like in a bikini, my husband decided that he needed a simple primer on basic good nutrition: What should he eat each day? What vitamins, if any, should he pop? While he liked the nutritional profile at FoodFit, two other sites answered his questions: the excellent interactive tools on **Cyberdiet [cyberdiet.com]** and the Vitamin Advisor on **DrWeil.com**.

We would be fit and thin, yet I still wondered, how am I doing on a more holistic level? By answering a battery of questions at **RealAge [realage.com]**, I came closer to understanding how my daily choices affect my well-being. This questionnaire not only assessed my biological age as a measure of wellness, but also gave suggestions on how I could improve my diet, lifestyle, and fitness level—and subsequently lower that age further. Sure, the site repeated some things I already knew (hey, exercise and diet are important), but it also pointed out a few ways to raise my life expectancy—such as taking vitamins C and E and, er, not talking on the cell while I drive. If I follow the site's easy, personalized plan, it claims my biological age will drop nine years in 90 days. I'm sure I'll find ways to fill the time.

One bugaboo remained, however. I still needed to figure out how to tackle daily stress. I found some answers back at the Mayo Clinic with its Healthy Lifestyle Planners. I punched in answers to questions about how often I clench my jaw when under deadline, grind my teeth while asleep, and worry on a day-to-day basis. Though the site didn't offer me a glass of red wine and a babysitter, it did provide some easy and memorable breathing exercises, a primer on meditation, a time-released series of customized, encouraging e-mail messages, and sundry tips on managing the overwhelming (yet altogether typical) amounts of stress in my life.

So can the tools, news, and good intentions of these sites really lead me to more healthful living? Perhaps. I've certainly learned a lot, including my level of sleep deprivation (**Drkoop.com**), my exercise personality type (**Myprimetime [myprimetime.com]**), my breast cancer risk (RealAge's Breast Cancer Screening), and the nutritional content of both a typical Chinese take-out meal and a Passover seder (**InteliHealth [intelihealth.com]**). But what my search confirmed most clearly was what had been demonstrated to me, ad nauseam, in Kauai: Wellness takes work. The Net may amount to a shortcut for gathering knowledge, but it can't do crunches or eat spinach for you. Now, if you'll excuse me, I'm off to buy vitamins and cross-training shoes—online, of course.

Sharon Epel has written for *Parenting, Ladies' Home Journal,* and other publications.

ALTERNATIVE REMEDIES

Five sites for thinking differently about health

What used to be called "alternative health"—herbal remedies, massage therapy, megavitamins—may still be alien to your M.D., but most Americans are embracing it as never before. Today, any comprehensive search for health resources includes alternative treatments. But medical advice from a less-than-reputable site may be useless or even dangerous. Here are five highly regarded sites to explore:

DRWEIL.COM
A can't-miss Web site from the granddaddy of mainstream alternative medicine. You'll find tools and articles such as his herbal medicine chest, food as medicine, and of course, the venerable doctor's eight-week plan for optimal health. **[drweil.com]**

NCCAM: NATIONAL CENTER FOR COMPLEMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE
This division of the National Institutes of Health was founded to investigate alternative and complementary medicine and therapies, and help patients and health care practitioners explore new approaches to old complaints. **[nccam.nih.gov]**

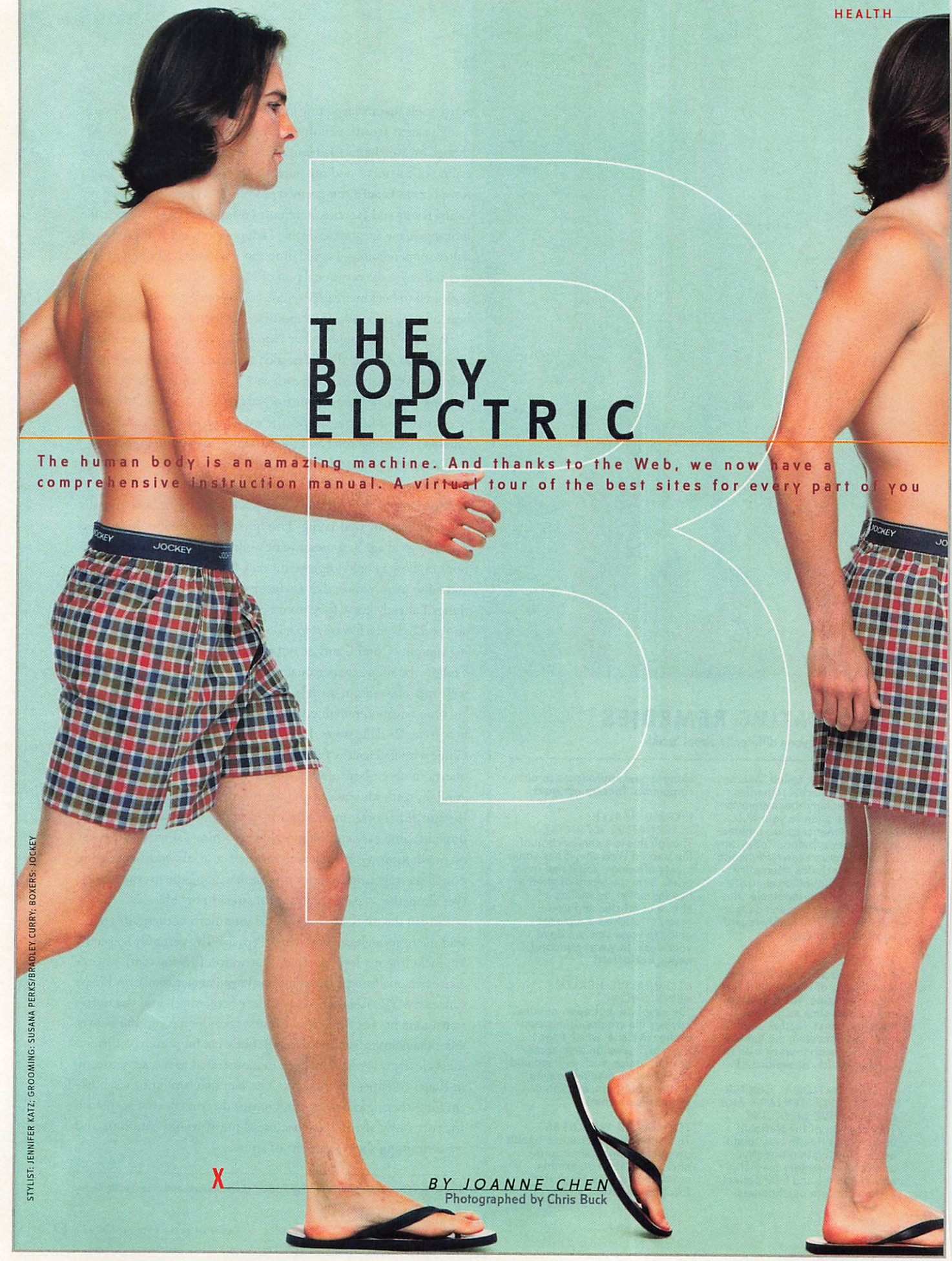
WEBMD HEALTH: ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE
Though this is a slim section of the packed Web site, it has some meaty offerings. You'll find news briefs from the world of alternative therapies, as well as a library of articles and useful graphics, such as a pictorial guide to yoga you can do at your desk. **[my.webmd.com/living_better/alt]**

ALTERNATIVE HEALTH NEWS ONLINE
"Be skeptical, but open-minded," advises the creator of this comprehensive site, which links to the latest news on a smorgasbord of topics, such as mind and body control, manual healing, diet and nutrition, and more. **[altmedicine.com]**

TOOLS FOR WELLNESS
This site offers alternative-health products for mental performance, meditation, relaxation, sexual power, and longevity. **[toolsforwellness.com]**

THE BODY ELECTRIC

The human body is an amazing machine. And thanks to the Web, we now have a comprehensive instruction manual. A virtual tour of the best sites for every part of you



STYLIST: JENNIFER KATZ; GROOMING: SUSANA PERKS/BRADLEY CURRY; BOXERS: JOCKEY

BY JOANNE CHEN
Photographed by Chris Buck

ASHA: American Social Health Association

www.ashastd.org

Get answers on sexually transmitted diseases and other nether region concerns.

Computer Related Repetitive Strain Injury

www.engr.unl.edu/ee/eeshop/rsi.html A rich resource on RSI from a guy who was afflicted with the ailment. He has assembled a well-chosen list of expert sites for prevention and relief tactics, a reading list, workers' compensation info, and a find-a-doctor page.

Reflexology Research Project

reflexology-research.com

Practitioners of reflexology focus on the hands and feet, applying pressure on those areas to relieve stress throughout the body. Newcomers will find a rundown on what reflexology is and what to expect.

National Osteoporosis Foundation

nof.org Prevention tips, the facts about risk factors, and the latest word on the effects of diet and exercise, new medications, research presented at professional gatherings, and legislation.

ClinicalTrials.gov

clinicaltrials.gov

A free database of experimental trials. The best resource on vaccines, emerging therapies, and new ways of using existing treatments for everything from bone cancer to viruses and other woes we hope you'll never have.

AC: ArthritisCentral.com

arthritiscentral.com Intense—every inch of your screen is so packed with articles, search options, and products for sale that it's hard to figure out where to start. Once you do, you'll find rich details, including a guide to medications and tests, interactive disease maps, links to clinical trials, rheumatologists, and more.

WOMEN ONLY

JAMA Women's Health

ama-assn.org/special/womh Abstracts from *The Journal of the American Medical Association* detail the newest studies and advances in women's health.

Obgyn.net

obgyn.net Exhaustive—covers pelvic pain, infertility, hysterectomy alternatives, menopause, the latest in ultrasound, and more.

Breastcancer.org

breastcancer.org

An essential resource for breast cancer patients and those who love them. Reports on new research and techniques, a medical glossary, live chats, links to clinical trials, and more.

Foot.com

foot.com The mission: "eliminating foot pain throughout the world." Each condition is meticulously described and diagrammed, followed by information on treatment and prevention options that connect directly to an illustrated catalog of products recommended by doctors on the site's advisory board.

SEVEN MOST TRUS

We surveyed medical authorities in a wide variety of fields. The r
Here are the most highly regarded sources for health information

According to the Pew Internet Project, 82 percent of people with Internet access are concerned about the reliability of the health info they find online. To determine the seven most trusted health sites, we consulted *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, **Kaiser Permanente's Health Information Check Up! [kp.org/hicheckup]**, and the RAND Center for Healthcare and the Internet. In addition, we conferred with doctors and health journalists and surveyed reports in publications ranging from *The New York Times* and *Newsweek* to **Forbes.com: Forbes Best of the Web [forbes.com/bow]**. Below, in no particular order, is our A-list. At right, four of our experts rate and review the sites in detail, marking the positive aspects—as well as the shortfalls—of these seven must-bookmark health sites.

MEDSCAPE HEALTH FOR CONSUMERS

With the respected George Lundberg, M.D., at its editorial helm, Medscape's consumer site can answer most of your questions. Formerly CBSHealthwatch, the site broke with CBS in November. Users can still browse among 48 Topic Centers through articles labeled basic, advanced, or expert, based on content—vital, given the scope here.

WEBMD HEALTH

The well-organized home page and overall breadth of information are what place this site on our list. In addition, WebMD addresses questions that are on consumers' minds. For quality assurance, the site submits all of its articles for review by its staff of full-time, board-certified physician-journalists.

NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH

The place where the 27 institutes and centers that constitute this public health service agency make their virtual home. You'll find the National Cancer Institute, the National Institute of Mental Health, and the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine. The Clinical Trials section is a helpful resource for finding new treatments.

MAYOCLINIC.COM

Two thousand of the clinic's doctors from around the country help generate content at this supersite. In addition, MayoClinic.com has one of the Web's most protective privacy policies. Other benefits: expert answers to reader questions, and the Weekly Drug Watch Index, which lists the latest developments concerning medications.

AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

While it's obviously a resource for doctors, medical students, and health care professionals, this site includes plenty of information of use to consumers as well. Focusing on the patient-physician relationship, the site includes a Doctor Finder, which provides basic background information on most licensed physicians in the U.S.

MEDLINEPLUS HEALTH INFORMATION

The experts we consulted all ranked this site highly for its readability and exhaustive information. Organized by topic, the content is easy to navigate. Its richly illustrated dictionaries and encyclopedias are indispensable. Though built for consumers, this site is as likely to get a visit from your doctor as from you.

MERCK-MEDCO

For the millions of Americans suffering from asthma, diabetes, or another chronic illness, managing pharmaceuticals online can alleviate much of the hassle of prescription refills. Approved as a Verified Internet Pharmacy Practice Site by the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy, the site dispenses more than 70,000 prescriptions a week.

RESEARCH BY MEAGHAN O'NEILL

SITE	RATING (1-5)	DANIEL Z. SANDS, M.D.
MEDSCAPE HEALTH FOR CONSUMERS [medscapehealth.com]	5	An amazing wealth of material. Accuracy of articles is affirmed by medical review. Some patients can access their digital records online.
WEBMD HEALTH [my.webmd.com]	5	The huge amount of information is well served by the illustrations and animation.
NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH [www.nih.gov]	3	Somewhat difficult to navigate, but a good launchpad to important resources. Lacks the graphics of commercial sites, but the info is solid.
MAYOCLINIC.COM [mayoclinic.com]	4	Since Mayo develops its own content, it's a rich source of original articles by internationally renowned experts.
AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION [ama-assn.org]	3	Best functions are the physician and hospital searches and the health information hosted by Medem, a for-profit spin-off of the AMA.
MEDLINEPLUS HEALTH INFORMATION [medlineplus.gov]	5	Makes searching medical literature approachable for everyone. Federally funded, so no ads.
MERCK-MEDCO [merck-medco.com]	4	Hosted by an insurance company's pharmaceutical benefits manager. Good drug reference section. Tells which drugs have a higher co-pay.

DANIEL Z. SANDS, M.D., clinical director of Electronic Patient Records and Communication, **Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center [www.bidmc.harvard.edu]**; assistant professor of medicine, Harvard Medical School

TED SITES

esults are in:
online

RATING	REGINA BENJAMIN, M.D.	RATING	NEIL IZENBERG, M.D. & KIM RUTHERFORD, M.D.
4	Very good information. The search engine is easy to use and returns accurate results, though the screen is busy.	4.5	Comprehensive coverage and ethical compliance. In particular, excellent pregnancy, mental health, and teen coverage.
3	Large site, but very commercial—I felt as though it was trying to sell me something.	4	Thorough range of topics. Online courses and journals are a nice touch. Some articles could use updating.
2	Best for patients in clinical trials and people researching specific types of disease, such as hyperthyroidism.	3.75	Excellent breadth of content, but navigation is difficult.
3	Searches work best on specific types of illness. Must register for access to some sections.	5	Articles are up-to-date and thorough without being too technical. Interactive features include diagrams and video.
3	Well designed. Helpful for finding a doctor. Good info on policy issues.	4	Articles are formal and clinical but easy to read. Excellent illustrations.
5	The best site for ease of use and information, with no advertising pressure.	5	Excellent news features and search engine, plus a drug index and dictionaries.
4	Easy-to-use search function and good information, but must register to get drug info.	4	Provides info about prescription drugs, including side effects, cost, and interactions with other drugs. Excellent mental-health content.

REGINA BENJAMIN, M.D., president-elect, Medical Association of Alabama; delegate to and former trustee of the American Medical Association

NEIL IZENBERG, M.D., founder, **KidsHealth [kidshealth.org]**, and KIM RUTHERFORD, M.D., fellow in Health Media, Nemours Foundation Center for Children's Health Media

ON-SITE EXAMINATION

How to know what to trust

It pays to be discriminating when looking for health information online. "The only way to be able to judge information completely is to go to medical school," says Dr. Stephen Barrett, founder of **Quackwatch [www.quackwatch.com]**, a site that cracks down on all sources of health fraud. Here are a few signs that can clue you in on whether you should stick with a site or skip it.

LOOK FOR AN "ABOUT US" SECTION. The site's sponsors should clearly state who they are and what their mission is. Be suspicious if you can't find an address and phone number.

POLICIES ON PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY SHOULD BE DETAILED AND EXPLICIT. Seals of approval such as HONcode are a plus but not always 100 percent reliable. While sites deserve credit for their time and effort in going through the application process, be aware that until an official policing system is put in place, these sites may go astray.

THE HEALTH INDUSTRY CHANGES CONSTANTLY, SO TIMELINESS IS IMPORTANT. Check the date on which the article you're reading was published. If the date is either missing or is from more than six months ago, get a second opinion.

ANY SCIENTIFIC FINDINGS SHOULD BE CLEARLY REFERENCED AND CHECKABLE. Look for names and dates of professional journals, as opposed to statements such as "As seen on TV!"

NOT ALL AWARDS ARE CREATED EQUAL. An honorable mention from the American Cancer Society is worth more than a trophy from John Doe's Cool Web Site Gallery.

DO YOUR HOMEWORK. Log on to **LinkPopularity.com** and type in the URL for a site to see how many other sites link to it. The more links, the more people use the site. Then head to a search engine and plug in a site name along with search terms such as *bad service, unhappy,* and *quack,* which should turn up any problems people have had using it. If you're looking for testimonials, try the site name along with *great, wonderful,* or *amazing.*

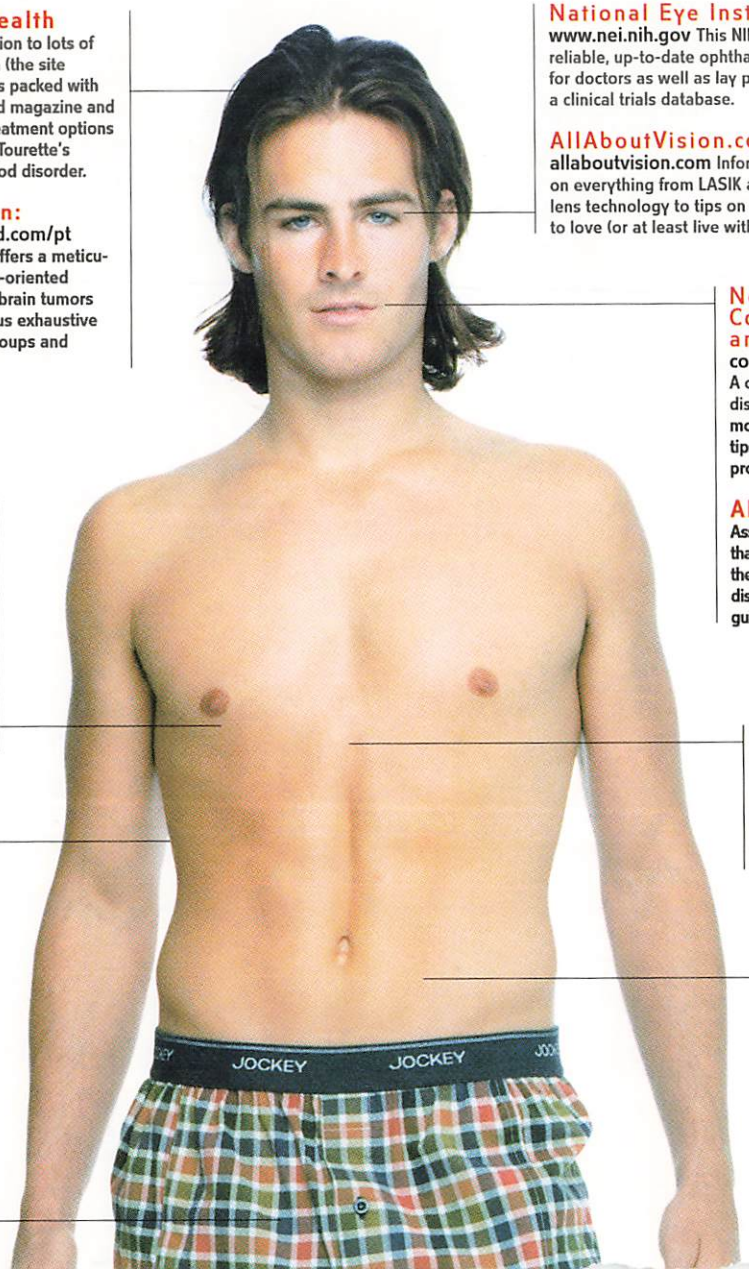
CHECK OUT A TOPIC YOU KNOW SOMETHING ABOUT. If you're well-versed in sun protection and can verify that the information provided by the site is accurate, then there's a good chance that other subject matter the site tackles is also fairly reliable.

JOANNE CHEN

MOST POPULAR HEALTH SITES

1. WEBMD* [webmd.com] 15%
2. EDIETS.COM 11%
3. DRUGSTORE.COM 7%
4. DIETSMART [dietsmart.com] 3%
5. MEDSCAPE [medscape.com] 3%
6. MERCK-MEDCO [merck-medco.com] 3%
7. DRKOOP.COM** [drkoop.com] 2%
8. THE BREAST CANCER SITE [thebreastcancersite.com] 3%
9. WEBRX [webrx.com] 3%
10. MAYOCLINIC.COM 2%

Y-Life compiled this chart based on data from Jupiter Media Metrix, January to October 2001. Figures indicate approximate percentage of total health universe traffic during October 2001. Category universe does not include data from AOL Health Channel.
*Represents an aggregation of commonly owned/branded domain names.
**At press time, has ceased operations.



Internet Mental Health
mentalhealth.com In addition to lots of information on schizophrenia (the site creator's specialty), the site is packed with news, research, booklets, and magazine and journal articles, as well as treatment options for mental conditions—from Tourette's syndrome to your boss's mood disorder.

Patient Information: Neuroland
neuroland.com/pt This brightly designed site offers a meticulously organized list of brain-oriented topics, from headaches and brain tumors to sleep and Alzheimer's, plus exhaustive links to caregiver support groups and drug research.

National Eye Institute
www.nei.nih.gov This NIH site provides reliable, up-to-date ophthalmology news for doctors as well as lay people, including a clinical trials database.

AllAboutVision.com
allaboutvision.com Information and links on everything from LASIK and new contact-lens technology to tips on getting your kid to love (or at least live with) glasses.

Net Connections for Communication Disorders and Sciences
communicationdisorders.com
A comprehensive site for all communication disorders (speech, language, hearing, and more), with journal links, legislative updates, tips on finding employment in the field, and products for therapists.

ADA.org
ada.org The American Dental Association's site reminds us: There's more than brushing and flossing to obsess about—there's the link between gum disease and heart disease. Features dental news, a find-a-dentist guide, and links to medical journal articles.

American Lung Association
lungusa.org
The latest research, news, treatments, programs, stats, links, and advocacy projects are all on this monster of a site created by the American Lung Association.

Allernet
allernet.com A gateway to asthma, allergy, and anaphylaxis information. Packed with food warnings, news reports, glossaries, nutrition analysis tools, and an exhaustive list of links.

Americanheart.org
americanheart.org Chock-full of the basics: warning signs for heart attack and stroke, risk assessments, dietary recommendations, the latest news reports, and a personalized health-management program for individual maintenance.

SpineUniverse
spineuniverse.com The collaboration of an international array of spine experts, this site includes information about orthopedics, chiropractics, and ergonomics. There's also an "ask a specialist" corner to pose questions about basic back anatomy or the circumstances relating to the pain.

iKidney.com
ikidney.com
This site serves the kidney well, with everything from discussions on fluid intake to articles on dialysis and organ transplants.

Hepatitis Central
hepatitis-central.com While it focuses on hepatitis C, which affects as many as 15 million people in the U.S., this site also provides extensive information on the A, B, D, and E forms of the virus, as well as on cirrhosis of the liver.

Malehealth
malehealth.co.uk
The latest on impotence, prostate cancer, alcohol intake, and other men's health issues. The timid can enter the virtual Waiting Room to participate in an anonymous chat or ask a specialist more pointed questions.

BOXERS: JOCKEY

EMERGENCY KIT

WEB SITES THAT CAN SAVE YOUR LIFE

BY MICHELLE HOLCENBERG

IN MANY MEDICAL EMERGENCIES, THE WEB CAN SERVE AS AN INVALUABLE SECOND WAVE OF DEFENSE AFTER CALLING FOR HELP. IN SOME INSTANCES IT CAN PROVIDE VITAL INFORMATION EVEN QUICKER THAN 911—BUT NOT IF YOU HAVE TO DO A SEARCH FIRST. CREATING A VIRTUAL EMERGENCY FOLDER ON YOUR BROWSER MEANS THE NET WILL BE READY TO HELP WHEN YOU NEED IT MOST.

FIRST AID KIT

thriveonline.oxygen.com/medical/library/article/001958.html

Having a well-stocked first aid kit helps when every second counts. ThriveOnline details exactly what should be in any serious kit, from allergy ointments to bandages and dressings to dental floss and eye medications, as well as separate lists of supplies for forest/mountain and aquatic environments.

BURNS

survival-center.com/firstaid/burns.htm

At Captain Dave's Survival Center, you can learn to evaluate first-, second-, and third-degree burns and how to treat each type in a hurry. Besides burn and other first aid advice, the site offers survival tips for anyone planning an extended stay in the Montana wilderness or worried about a comet striking the earth.

ASTHMA

lungusa.org/asthma/astasthmatk.html

Severe asthma attacks come without warning—suddenly you (or your friend) can't breathe. The American Lung Association provides advice on when to use medications to treat symptoms and when to head for the emergency room. Its Diseases A to Z takes you beyond asthma to a host of other lung-related sites.

CPR, CHOKING

depts.washington.edu/learncpr

If someone is unconscious, your first move after calling 911 is to see if the person is breathing, and if not, start cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). This lifesaving technique essentially involves breathing for the victim and keeping blood flowing to the brain and other vital organs until help arrives. A hands-on training course is ideal, but you can still teach yourself CPR (now, not during an emergency) with the University of Washington School of Medicine's step-by-step instructions on how to administer CPR to adults, children, and infants. The site includes a video demo, a printable pocket-size card, and a guide to performing the Heimlich maneuver.

HEART ATTACK

americanheart.org

With a heart attack, time is of the essence. It's crucial to determine right away if chest pain and lightheadedness are cause for serious concern or just a Rolaids moment. The American Heart Association lists warning signs and what to do if these occur. (Hint: Dial 911 in a hurry.) You'll find links to warning signs of stroke as well.

POISON

my.webmd.com/content/asset/adam_injury_poisoning_first_aid

WebMD's extensive listing of symptoms and causes of poisoning explains what to do, what not to do, and how to prevent problems in the future. If you think someone's been poisoned, log on to the American Association of Poison Control Centers' **Find Your Poison Center [aapcc.org/findyour.html]** for the one nearest you.

ALLERGIES

intelihealth.com/IH/ihtIH/WSIHW000/7945/8218/213079.html?d=dmtContent

Everything from peanuts to bee stings to cleaning chemicals can cause severe allergic reactions, sometimes in those who never realized that they had allergies. A rapid pulse, sweating, dizziness, fainting, and swelling are just some of the symptoms that can accompany these reactions. Intelihealth takes you through all your allergy worries, providing detailed information on diagnosis, treatment, and future prevention. Most important, the site can help you decide whether to call for help or take an antihistamine and wait it out.

DOG BITE

familydoctor.org/handouts/203.html

The American Academy of Family Physicians offers information about how to care for dog and cat bites at home and when to see a doctor. To help quell fears on the way to the office, it also explains what to expect when you get there.

SEARCHING FOR A CURE

After his father was diagnosed with cancer, our author used the Web to remedy his family's fears and learn more about the disease

BY BERNIE YEE
Photographed by Chris Buck

DECEMBER 1998: I'M 33 YEARS OLD, MARRIED, AND LIVING in New York City. My wife and I are debating whether we should have children, and I'm trying to figure out how I can raise enough capital to start my own video-game software company. I work out at my local gym, but I'm finding that it's harder than ever before to lose those extra pounds around the waist.

This much I expected out of life. What I did not anticipate was that my father might not live long enough to see his grandchildren. He's the embodiment of good health. He eats plenty of veggies, swims laps in the pool most days, and goes swing dancing with Mom on weekends.

When I first heard the news of his prostate cancer, I was in a state of shock. In fact, I don't remember much about that day at all. The one thing I do recall thinking was this: *Even thirtysomethings believe their parents will live forever.*

Discovering prostate cancer in its early stages can be a lifesaver—a PSA (prostate-specific antigen) test can help you do that. Choosing the right treatment after a positive diagnosis for prostate cancer can also be a lifesaver—the Internet can help you do that. Although the Web won't replace the patient-physician relationship any time soon, it's now an integral part of the equation for those concerned about their health. Last year alone, more than 65 million Americans connected to the Net in search of health-related content. And with good reason: As opposed to health care, it costs next to nothing to surf the Web for ad-

vice—and you don't have to wait for an appointment to visit a site.

This is what initially appealed to my father when he received the news of his condition. He had so many questions, and his oncologist had provided so few answers. Here is what my father was able to learn from his doctors:

1) His cancer was limited to his prostate, and he could hope for a full recovery so long as he underwent one of two treatments—surgery or radiation.

2) Surgery has a good success rate for curing prostate cancer. But it can damage nearby nerves that affect both sexual potency and bladder control.

3) Radiation therapy could blast the cancer without doing much damage to the surrounding healthy tissue. However, the technique was newer, and its success rate was less well documented.

4) Whichever choice my Dad made, he had to do something pretty soon, because a measurement called his Gleason score was a 7.

Even when my father was wrong about something he read on the Internet, it led to a constructive conversation with his oncologist

If that sounds like a lot to process in a half hour, that's because it is. This was when my father, a man who's taught college-level physics and yet still struggles with the concept of drag-and-drop, asked me to sit him down in front of a computer and connect him to the Net for the first time.

Though he spent his first few days in a paroxysm of techno fear, the training wheels soon came off and I was able to leave my father on his own. It'll come as no surprise that he started where many Internet newbies do, running simple queries at **Yahoo! [yahoo.com]** and **LookSmart [looksmart.com]**.

His first goal on the Web was to find a glossary of terms that could explain the implications of his mysterious Gleason score.

He was relieved to discover **MedlinePlus Health Information [medlineplus.gov]**, a free repository of health-related information from the National Library of Medicine at the National Institutes of Health. The site has an expansive online encyclopedia that provides more than 4,000 articles about diseases, symptoms, and surgeries, as well as digital images of medical photographs and illustrations.

After thumbing through this electronic textbook, he learned that a Gleason score is—in the simplest of terms—a measure of a cancer's aggressiveness. Gleason scores are rated on a scale ranging from 2 to 10, with 10 being the most aggressive. Though my father's cancer had been rated a 7, that number wasn't as worrisome as it seemed, according to the site. However, further online research revealed that Gleason scores can be unreliable. A cancer could, in fact, be less aggressive than a score indicated—or conversely, much worse.

This ambiguity frustrated my father, a "numbers guy" whose life is given order by the logic of equations and solutions. My sister Pamela sensed his anxiety and did some surfing of her own. Over at the **Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center [www.mskcc.org]**, she dug up information that explained the correlation of PSA counts to Gleason scores. We started to question the oncologist's initial diagnosis.

When he read this, Dad made an appointment for a second opinion—something he should have done at the the very outset. This time he met with a top urologist at my sister's medical school. (Did I mention that at that time Pamela was studying to be a doctor? Today she's a resident in internal medicine.) Based on a second reading of the cell samples from Dad's biopsy, he estimated that my father's Gleason score was closer to a 6. While the cancer remained a very real threat, it was not as aggressive as we had been led to believe. Even so, he explained that my father would still have to undergo some kind of treatment for his illness. And so, Dad logged on once again, this time to research the latest information on surgery versus radiation.

At MedlinePlus, he found a link to the Na- CONTINUED ON PAGE 91

CANCER RESOURCES

THE CIRCLE [prostatepointers.org/circle]
Prostate cancer patients and their friends and family can use this mailing list to share advice and personal stories on fighting the illness.

AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY [cancer.org]
A home for patients, survivors, and their family members; the site provides a useful In My Community resource for finding activities and support groups.

CANCERFACTS.COM [cancerfacts.com]
In addition to news and online support groups, the site offers a Cancer Profiler database, which surfers can use to assess their risk for various forms of cancer.

CANCERNET [cancernet.gov]
Read a wealth of cancer-related information on causes, risk factors, and treatments, as well as a database of literature on cancer.

CANCERTRIALS [cancertrials.nci.nih.gov]
Along with **CenterWatch [centerwatch.com]**, this is one of the best resources for learning about the latest cancer trials, and whether they're right for you.

INTELIHEALTH [intelihealth.com]
This expansive hub of health know-how partners with Harvard Medical School to provide some of the clearest, down-to-earth explanations of disease you'll find anywhere online.

MEDLINEPLUS HEALTH INFORMATION [medlineplus.gov]
The National Library of Medicine at the National Institutes of Health offers surfers an online encyclopedia of medical jargon, and thousands of links to relevant abstracts.

NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH [www.nih.gov]
Pore over updated news articles detailing the latest treatments for cancer-related diseases and other illnesses.

ONCOLINK [oncolink.com]
This immensely useful resource, which is hosted by the University of Pennsylvania, posts information on nearly every form of cancer.

WEBMD [webmd.com]
A terrific link for answering most general health-related queries. The site can also help you find a reliable specialist in your area.

THE CANCER GENOME ANATOMY PROJECT [cgap.nci.nih.gov]
Stay abreast of the latest developments in the field of molecular research and the efforts to find gene expressions that are thought to lead to cancer-related diseases.

SUPPORT ACROSS THE BOARDS

How the Web heeded a breast cancer patient's call for help

JEFF STEPHENS

I lied to my gynecologist.

I hadn't intended to, but when he asked me whether I was there for a routine exam, I just nodded my head yes. The truth is, I'd made the appointment to have a lump in my left breast examined. I was anxious to see if he would find it on his own. He didn't.

At the end of the exam, I fessed up. I explained the real reason for my appointment and put his hand on the pea-size piece of compressed worry I'd been carrying around. My doctor suspected it was a fluid-filled cyst that could easily be drained, so he sent me to a radiology lab where I received an ultrasound and a mammogram. The results were inconclusive.

In the months that followed, I would receive many more exams, including two biopsies. Throughout it all, my physicians repeated the phrase "It's just precautionary" as if it were some kind of protective mantra. But I was never convinced, so I started logging some hours online in search of info about my secret fear: breast cancer.

I went to several search engines and ran queries on the obvious terms (i.e., *breast cancer*). I found dozens of helpful links, such as the **American Cancer Society [cancer.org]** and **Y-Me National Breast Cancer Organization [y-me.org]**, that helped me familiarize myself with the medical jargon my doctors were using with increasing frequency.

I also discovered busy message boards where women openly shared their feelings about every aspect of the breast cancer experience. I was a bit leery of these discussion groups; I wasn't quite ready to chat about my private life with complete strangers. After all, I hadn't been diagnosed with anything. Then I received a call from my breast surgeon with the results of a second biopsy. Precautionary? I think not. The lump was not benign after all.

I was, to say the least, frantic. Although my husband and two children (ages 5 and 11 at the time) were of great comfort to me, they couldn't understand how I was feeling. I needed to talk with other breast cancer patients. Thanks to the waves of nausea from my chemotherapy treatment, however, I was often too sick to get out of bed, let alone drive 30 minutes to a local support group.

Which explains how I overcame my fear of cyber-intimacy and finally started participating in the Net's breast cancer message boards. Sites such as **Just Us [members.aol.com/gmcmullen/justhome.html]**, a support site run by a breast cancer survivor, and America Online's Health Community [Keyword: *Health Talk*] became my doorway to a world of support, encouragement, and shared knowledge.

I primarily used the boards to ask questions: "Is anyone else using the method I've selected for breast reconstruction?" "What about that new shampoo that's supposed to help your hair grow back faster?" I also solicited the online community for info on medications to help me cope with the nausea that now dominated my life. Some women suggested prayer while others championed Marinol, a legal drug that contains the same active ingredient found in marijuana.

Then one woman recommended I take a drug called Ativan. She swore it'd take care of the nausea. Fortunately for me, she was right—within days I had a prescription for it from my oncologist, despite the fact that he hadn't thought to recommend it himself. Score one for message board power.

Of course, I also frequented the boards for more than just information. I sought companionship. Though my situation is now far less dire, I still visit the sites from time to time. On a recent visit to the Just Us board, I read a message announcing the passing of one of the site's most active members. It included a note from the deceased's husband, in which he extended his thanks to the women on the boards and expressed how much comfort and support his wife had found online. When I read this, I just sat at my computer and wept. I wept for the woman. I wept for her husband. And I wept because I had so much to be thankful for.

The reality is that not everyone makes it through breast cancer. But the Web has allowed those who are afflicted to reach out in their time of greatest need and take strength from those in the same predicament. While individually we might not be able to sit up, let alone get out of bed, together we are a powerful force for healing, support, companionship, and most important of all, hope.

Laney Katz Becker is the author of *Dear Stranger, Dearest Friend*, a novel based on her experience with breast cancer [dearstranger.com].

BY LANEY KATZ BECKER

DO DOCTORS MAKE MOUSE CALLS?

Doctors are using the Net in amazing new ways—and reinventing the personal touch

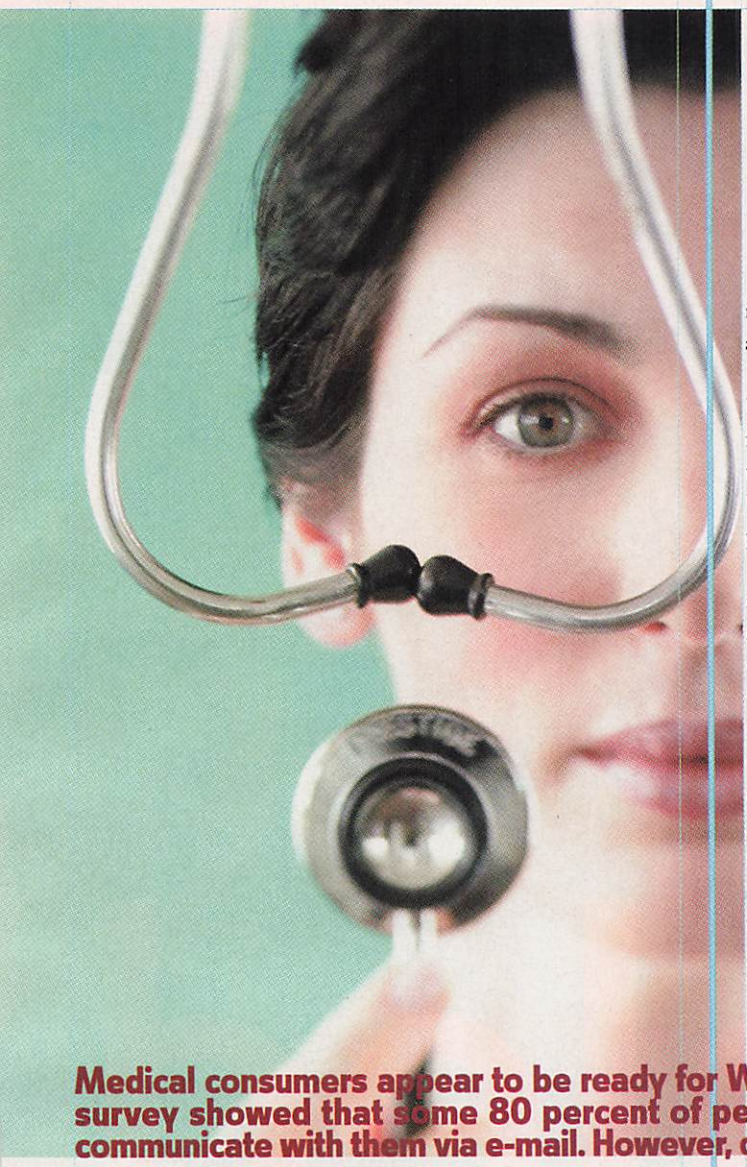
Doctors stopped making house calls back in the days when typists still used carbon paper. But imagine that you and your doctor both have Web cams, and that tape-on sensors wired into your computer can feed your vital signs to your physician's screen, miles away—not a bad approximation. Still, while the technology is available today, technology alone won't usher in a new era of "mouse calls." A Web-doc future requires nothing less than a complete transformation of medical culture. Mouse calls are a distinct possibility in some settings: for example, in remote areas where people simply can't get to doctors. But for the majority of Americans, Web-based medical consults are probably a generation away, largely because today's doctors believe deeply that medical consults should be conducted face-to-face.

That's not to say that physicians are shunning the Web. Far from it. For doctors, computer technology ranks as the greatest advance in medicine since the discovery of penicillin. Consider the changes in the work life of Dr. Leonard M. Rubin, a Boston internist. Before computers, he wrote patient notes by hand or dictated them into a tape recorder. Dictated notes might take days to be transcribed and then filed. Patients' charts sometimes got lost. He spent a good deal of every day playing phone tag to get lab results and reports from specialists who'd examined his patients. Often he couldn't get through to them and had to wait days to be notified by mail. He was interrupted several times a day by calls from patients who needed little things, such as an extra prescription refill to take on vacation. To research med-

X

BY MICHAEL CASTLEMAN

JEFF STEPHENS



Medical consumers appear to be ready for Web-based medicine. A Harris Interactive survey showed that some 80 percent of people online would like their doctors to communicate with them via e-mail. However, only 19 percent of doctors currently do so

ical questions, he had to drive eight miles to the nearest medical library—and hope that the journal he needed was on the shelf. Often, it wasn't. If the Food and Drug Administration ordered a drug withdrawn, his staff had to sift through hundreds of patient records by hand to find those who had to be notified.

"Now," says the 69-year-old techie doc, who 25 years ago persuaded his partners to invest in one of the first computerized medical billing systems, "it's a different world. Today, patient records are computerized—the complete medical history and notes from every exam. Charts never get lost anymore. Every one is in the database all the time. Records are password-protected, of course, but the specialists in our referral network can access them and get a patient's entire history. Consultants add their findings and notes right into the record—no waiting for consult reports." If Rubin has a question for a specialist, he sends an e-mail. And on any of the Web-enabled computers in his office, he can easily access **MedlinePlus Health Information [medlineplus.com]** (see "Most Trusted Sites," page 57) for reams of medical research, which means he doesn't see much of the library anymore.

Rubin and other doctors are employing e-mail for small, impersonal tasks such as prescription refills. "Patients e-mail me, and I e-mail the pharmacy with the authorization," he says.

When the cholesterol-lowering drug Baycol was withdrawn, Rubin did a keyword search of his database of patients and in about five seconds had a list of every individual who had been taking the medication and needed to be notified. "Computers and the Net are fantastic time-savers," says Rubin. "They've increased my productivity way beyond what I could have imagined 20 years ago."

Other doctors echo Rubin's enthusiasm. "You can call up records online," says Dr. David Vastola, a gastroenterologist based in North Palm Beach, Florida, who sees a number of patients remotely. "You can send prescriptions online and communicate with specialists by e-mail. And when I have patients hooked up to monitors, I can call up their vital signs from my office computer."

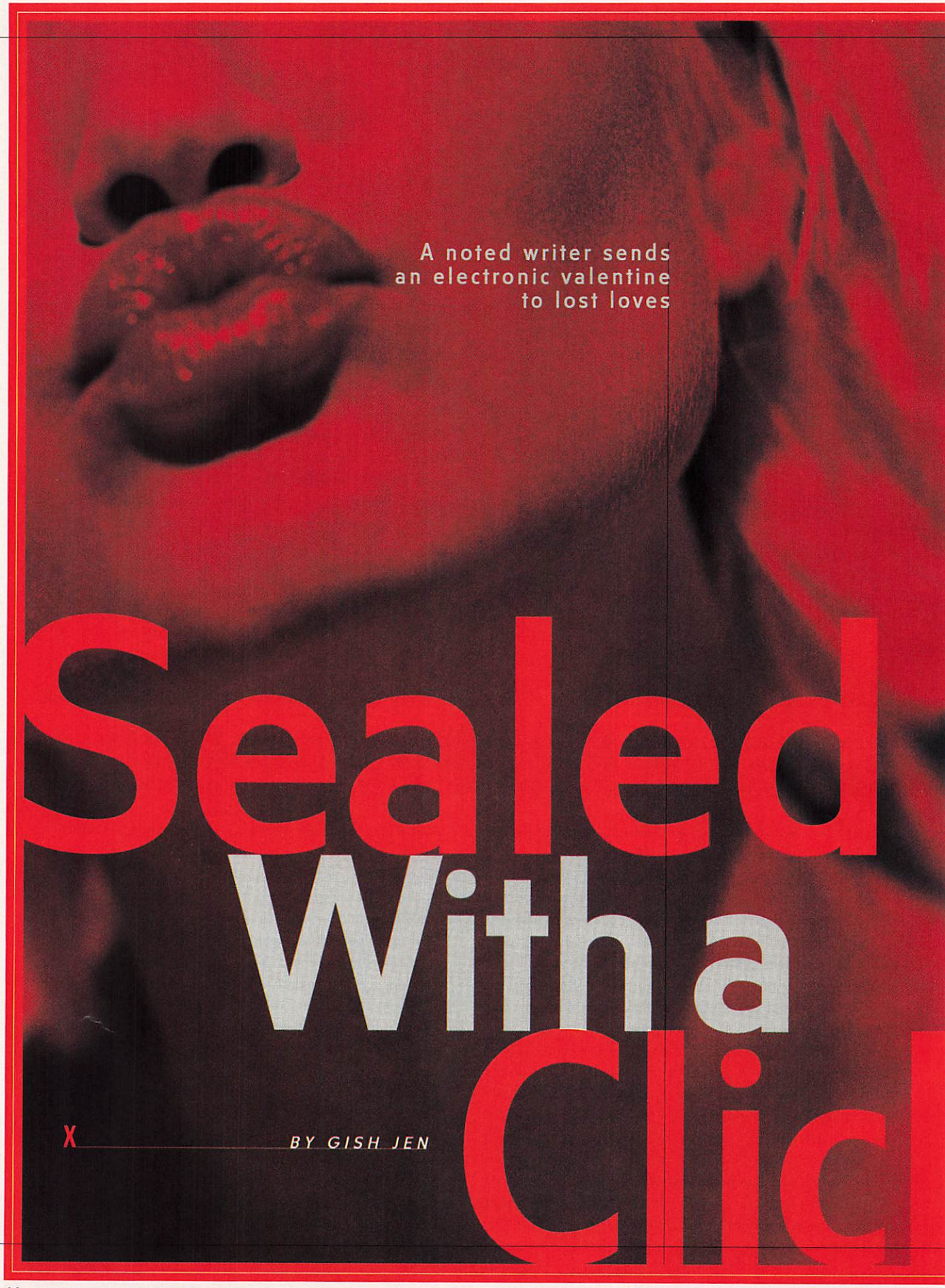
Doctors are getting results much faster as well. "CT scans and MRIs are digital," says Dr. Peter Rothschild, a California radiologist who is an expert in MRI technology. "Instead of transferring digital imaging studies to sheets of film, which can take days for delivery and are easily misplaced, I send the images to an Internet data center. Within minutes, they can be viewed simultaneously by several physicians in different offices." The result: faster service for impatient patients.

PDAs are another new tool of the wired doc's practice. In 1999, only 15 percent of all physicians in the U.S. used handhelds. Today that figure is 26 percent—among docs under 45, it's 33 percent. "A lot of older doctors still prefer to leaf through medical books," says Dr. Zachary Segal, a first-year resident at Cabrini Medical Center in New York City. "But younger doctors and medical students will download references right into their handhelds. That's an extraordinary benefit, for example, when it comes to cross-checking medication doses while seeing patients."

Today's doctor has a rich well of online data at his fingertips. "I can immediately look up new medications, side effects, and interactions," says South Carolina–based Dr. John F. Abess, an adviser to Healinx (a company that provides a variety of Web-based doctor-patient communication services) and founder of **Psychiatry-Online [psychiatry-online.com]**. "The convenience enables me to practice medicine that is more accurate."

Technology has also solved one of the medical world's oldest and thorniest conundrums: doctors' illegible handwriting. While docs' scribbling may be an old joke, it's also a real problem. When prescriptions are keyed in CONTINUED ON PAGE 92

HEAD TO YIL.COM/HEALTH FOR A ROUNDUP OF ANTHRAX AND BIOTERROR SITES



A noted writer sends an electronic valentine to lost loves

Sealed With a Click

BY GISH JEN

Ex-boyfriends: Suddenly, gloriously, they are everywhere.

Now, I should inform you up front that I am 45 and happily married. There are things I wish my husband was or wasn't, but to leave him now, after 18 years of marriage, would be like amputating a large, perfectly functional body part. Like many women I know, I can still imagine a romantic dinner with someone else, but after the romantic dinner I'd want to go home—can you tell I'm middle-aged?—to my hubby.

At the same time, I find myself suddenly rocked by, well, other feelings. For instance, I recently went to the 25th reunion of the class ahead of me in college (not as weird as it sounds—I live nearby), and there, sure enough, were all manner of lesser and greater former involvements. They were, to my relief, not jerks. I was happily startled to realize that I have always been drawn to good-hearted men, even as I was distinctly glad, beholding said good-hearted men, to have married as I did: Not one of them would have supported me the way my husband has, which is to say in every way possible, from the get-go. I felt like the luckiest woman there.

I must admit, I had not thought of most of these people more than once a year in the past 25 years.

Yet how they touched me. I was not quite prepared to see them, but no matter; I did not have to be prepared. For here was the surprise: They did not package themselves for me, nor I for them. After all these years, there was still trust between us, and some level of understanding. All of them were a credit to themselves, and to society. They were successful men doing interesting and worthwhile things. But more than that, they were open about their vulnerabilities: the 100,000 words of business writing one man did each month when his heart lay elsewhere; the essential loneliness another man felt—had felt even, yes, in college, where he had seemed so happy. I was touched, too, to see how much people were still themselves: One guy, always big-hearted, took time out from the proceedings to throw a ball with my son. Another reported he had a picture of my kids on his fridge.

I wanted to turn them all into girlfriends.

They would not have liked that. Still, I wanted it—to be able to keep them in my life, to be able to call them up out of the blue. I wanted to be rid of the boy-girl stuff. I wanted to be able to say how much they meant to me, without having to worry that it would be taken the wrong way. I wanted to be able to use their bathroom, as at one point I had to do, and not feel the weirdness of finding myself in some guy's dorm room. (For the record, I exited in a manner befitting a 45-year-old mother of two.)

And, maudlin as it sounds, I wanted—I want—to be able to say good-bye to them all when my clock stops ticking.

I told my husband this the night of the reunion, after we got home. It was not a confession, as there was nothing to confess, but the telling did feel like an Honest Marital Conversation. It was a one-sided conversation. There was a long pause at the end.

"Hmm," he said.

"I guess I thought you'd understand," I said.

"Hmm," he said again.

I tugged at his pillow. "David?"

"E-mail," he said. "Make sure you get everyone's e-mail address. I'll bring an iBook to your deathbed."

How I love that man! Almost as much as I love e-mail, that exquisitely intimate disembodied medium.

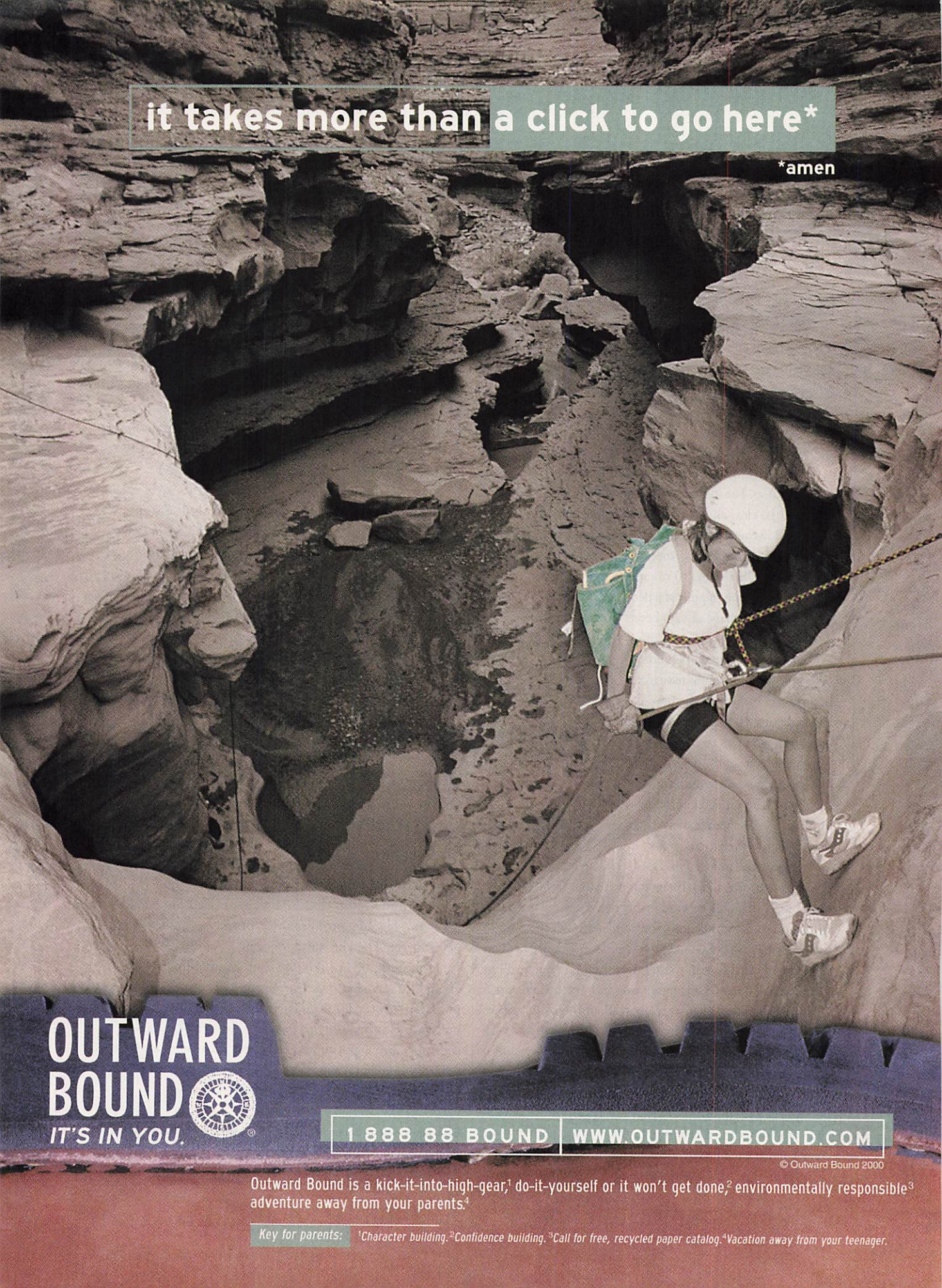
I reminded him that he had promised me I could die first. He said a promise was a promise, and he would never forget. Then he started snoring.

I, though, lay awake just a moment longer—long enough to envision myself hooked up to an IV, a laptop in my lap. I was consoled. The Internet was a big miracle, but for me, it had only to perform this small miracle to earn my eternal gratitude. I only hoped I would not have writer's block. For what exactly would I say? Please do write back ASAP? I'm dying to hear from you? ■

I love that man! Almost as much as I love e-mail, that exquisitely intimate disembodied medium

Gish Jen is author of the novels *Typical American* and *Mona in the Promised Land*. Her short story, "Birthmates," is included in *The Best American Short Stories of the Century*.

TONY GARCIA/GETTYONE



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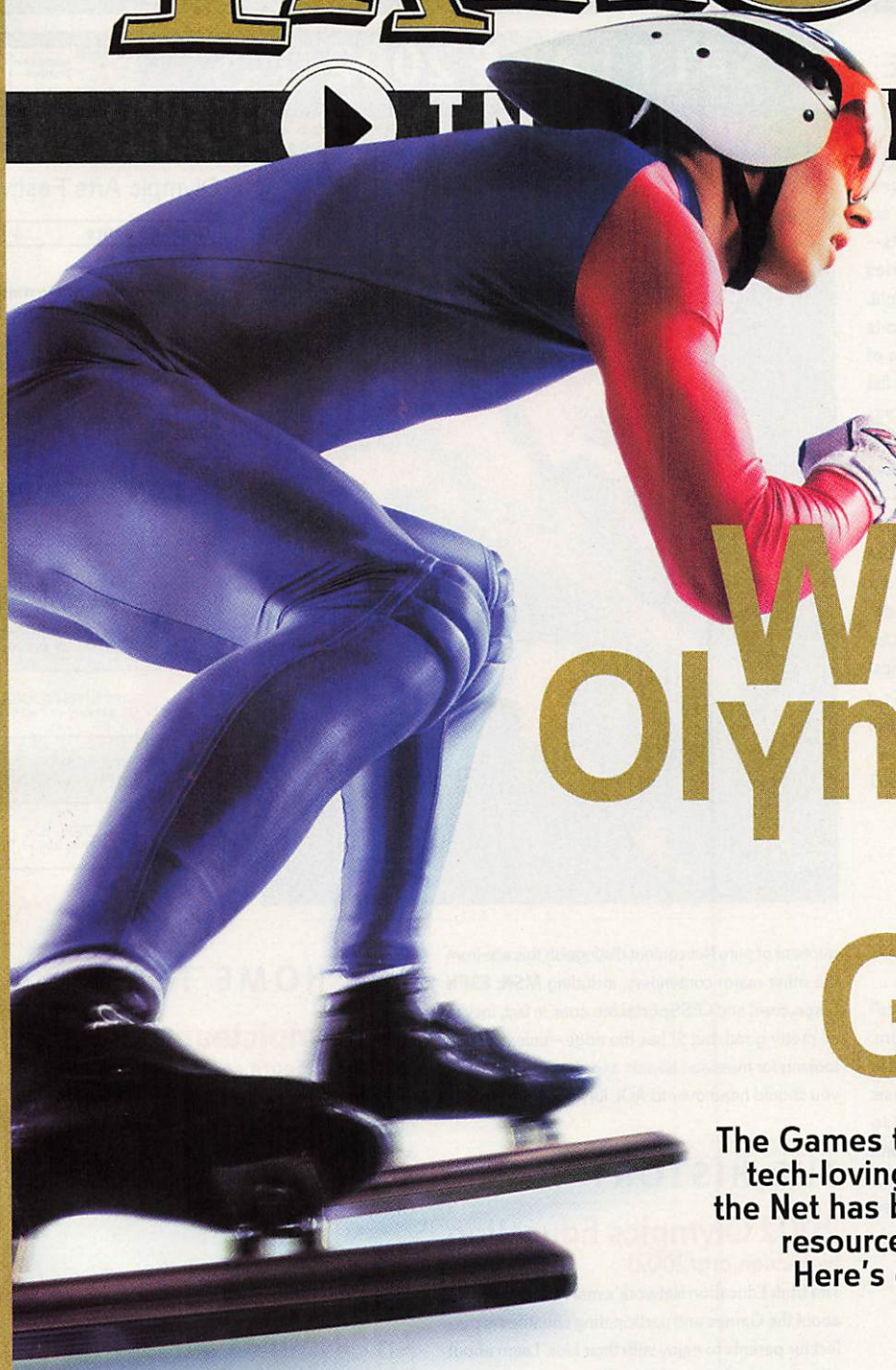
YAHOO! INTERNET LIFE®



2002 Winter Olympics Net Guide

The Games today are as wired as the tech-loving athletes who excel, and the Net has become an indispensable resource for following the action. Here's our road map to the gold

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71 ONE-MINUTE MAP: A GUIDE TO THE GAMES ONLINE

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75 BUZZED: THE MOST-WIRED ATHLETES

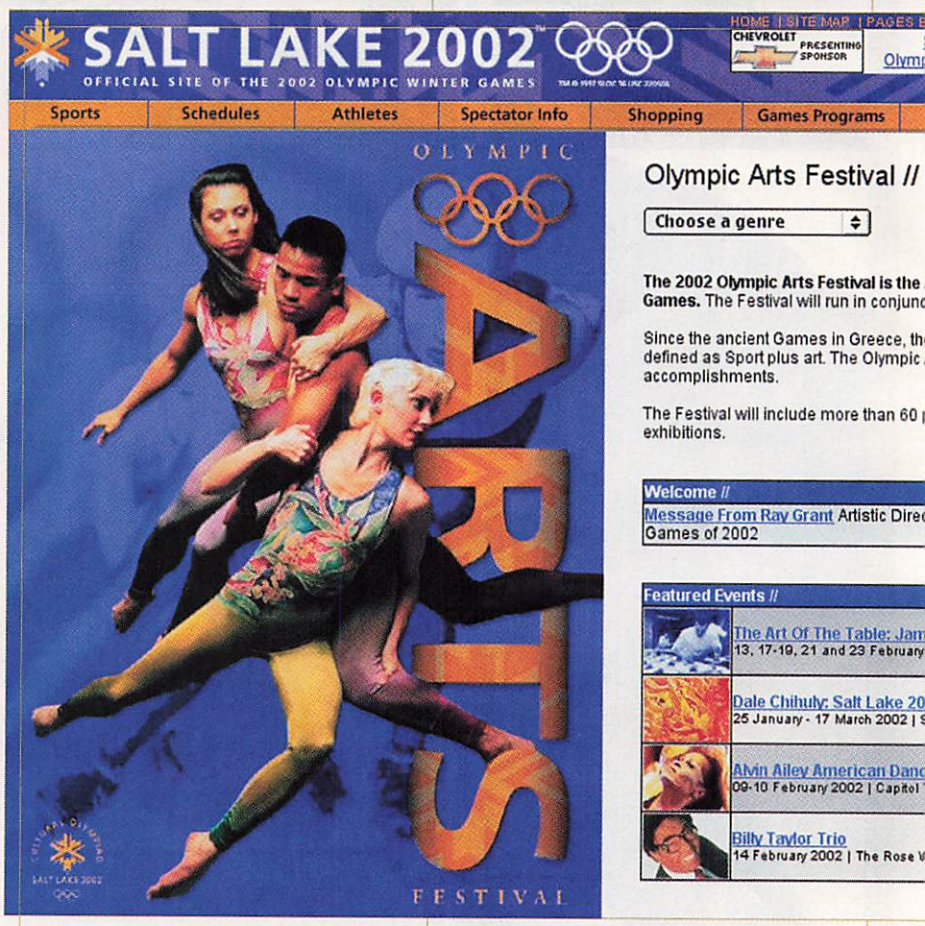
ALAN THORNTON/GETTYONE

Essent

THE STARTING LINE

Salt Lake 2002
[saltlake2002.com]

If you visit only one Web site during the Olympics, this is it. Everything's here: info on tickets and accommodations, a complete rundown of events—even broadcast schedules for foreign countries should you find yourself abroad during the fortnight. Drill down for thorough introductions to all 15 sports and bios for every athlete, as well as profiles of the more than 80 countries represented. The list of features just keeps on growing: There are virtual tours of venues and "picture shows" taken from NBC's TV coverage; a kids' section (which includes the only Olympic mascots—Copper and Coal—to be named after natural resources); and interactive elements such as You Be the Judge, where you score the figure-skating competition and compare your marks with those of the judges. There are also detailed sections on the Paralympics (the Olympics for the disabled that takes place just after the Games) and the Olympic Arts Festival. And, yes, there's a store offering official merchandise, from the typical (key chains, pins) to the tacky (American-flag-covered liquor flasks) to the truly bizarre (official 2002 Olympics Dutch oven, anyone?).



THE TUBE

NBCOlympics.com
[nbcolympics.com]

The Internet arm of NBC's "Complete Olympics" offers the best TV broadcast schedule and more. While the official Olympics site (above) is broad in scope, the focus here is narrower. The emphasis is on the U.S., with an entire section devoted to introducing members of the U.S. Olympic Team. The site also offers live results and expert analysis from former Olympians such as Dan Jansen (speed skating) and Sandra Bezic (figure skating).

THE SPORTS HUBS

CNN/SI: 2002 Winter Olympics
[cnnsi.com/olympics]

Unsurpassed photography, top-notch writing, the outstanding SI Olympic Almanac and Timeline (with highlights and essays on past Olympics), and a high quotient of pure Net content distinguish this site from the other major contenders, including **MSN: ESPN [espn.com]** and **CBSSportsLine.com**. In fact, they're all pretty good, but SI has the edge—unless you're looking for message boards and chat, in which case you should head over to AOL Keyword: *sports*.

THE HISTORY

2002 Olympics Education
[www.uen.org/2002]

The Utah Education Network's marvelous resource about the Games and participating countries is perfect for parents to enjoy with their kids. Learn about athletic triumphs worldwide. This site should be required surfing for geography-impaired Americans. See also Britannica.com (type in *Olympic Games*) for a feast of entries on the Olympics and its past.

THE HOME TEAM

USOlympicteam.com
[usolympicteam.com]

Get to know the Americans going for the gold and gather tips from athletes to help you ski, skate, and curl ever better. This site's also your best bet for official garb, with proceeds going to fund U.S. Olympic Committee programs.

THE ANSWERS

An Olympic Games Primer
[aafla.org/6oic/primer_frmst.htm]

Why the five interlocking rings? What's up with the torch? Is there a Kerri Strug drinking game? Here you'll find brief yet informative articles on

BY ED LOVETT

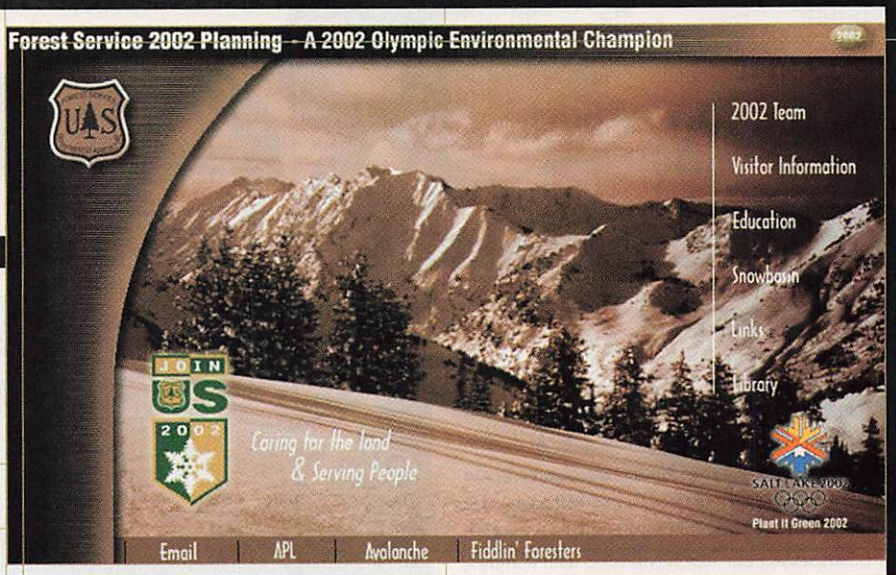
ials

all things Olympic, plus a bibliography for further study. (Note: To our great dismay, there is no Kerri Strug drinking game.) For more facts, see the 2,000 Games-related articles at the Olympic dictionary **Dicolympic.com [www.dicolympic.com]**.

THE PHOTOS

Kodak.com
[kodak.com]

Daily during the Games, Kodak will post an "Official Picture of the Day." In addition, the site's e-magazine will have a special Olympic edition, with a Utah photo tour and a feature on celebrated Olympic documentarian Bud Greenspan. The photo shop also promises a candid photo series that will capture the excitement of being at the Salt Lake City Olympics.



THE NATURAL WORLD

Forest Service 2002 Planning
[www.fs.fed.us/r4/2002]

The Forest Service reports that the 2002 Winter Games will likely bring an additional million people to northern Utah in February, practically doubling the local population temporarily. Sure, it's great to cart lots of people out into the wilderness for sport, but how much wilderness will be left by the time they're gone? This site focuses on the environmental aspects of the Games and the efforts to protect the lovely Wasatch Mountains.

A Quick Guide to the Olympics Online

SPORT	KEY DATES	MAIN SITE	INSIDER'S FAVORITE	BONUS ROUND
ICE HOCKEY	Feb. 21, 24: Women's, Men's Gold Medal Games	**usahockey.com**	**whockey.com** A homemade women's hockey shrine.	**www.exploratorium.edu/hockey** Hockey science.
FIGURE SKATING	Feb. 9, 11: Pairs Programs	**usfsa.org**	**www.fsworld.com** The juicy gossip.	**heatherw.com/mk** Dedicated to the cult of Michelle Kwan.
SPEED SKATING	Feb. 11–14: 500 Meters	**speedskating.ca**	**speedskating.com** All the numbers, all the dish.	**Google Groups [groups.google.com]:** *rec.sport.skating.racing* Bracing.
FREESTYLE SKIING	Feb. 18–19: Aerial Finals	**freestyleski.com**	**jonnymoseley.com** The reigning moguls champ's online hideout.	**airbergy.com** Eric Bergoust's self-run site, full of video clips.
ALPINE SKIING	Feb. 21–22: Giant Slalom Finals	**www.usskiteam.com/alpine/alpine.htm**	**skiracing.com** Objective coverage from the bible of the sport.	**fis-ski.com** The official global body of *le ski* and other snow sports.
SNOWBOARDING	Feb. 15: Finals	**www.ussnowboard.com**	**snowboarding.com** The top rider-community site. Tons of features.	**snowboarding2.com** A cool collection of boarding-related info.
LUGE	Feb. 15: Doubles Finals	**usaluge.org**	**fil-luge.org** Global results from the world federation site.	**www.luge.com** This site's got it all, even luge sounds.
SKELETON	Feb. 20: All Events	**usbsf.com**	**skeletonsport.com** Killer photos.	**soule-man.com** An amateur site from a daring racer.
BOBSLEIGH	Feb. 17, 19: Two-Man, Two-Woman Finals	**bobsleigh.com**	**bobsleddingbird.org** Aiming for 2006.	**www.jamaicanbobsled.com** A real contender, mon.
BIATHLON	Feb. 13, 16: 10km Pursuit	**usbiathlon.com**	**www.ibu.at** The global scoop.	**biathlon.net** Everything you need to know about biathlon.
CURLING	Feb. 21–22: Gold Medal Matches	**curling.com**	**www.usacurl.org** The curlers among us are *really* into it.	**curlingzone.com** All curling, all the time: info, tips, and community.

Review

ICE HOCKEY

HOME TEAM

Herb Brooks, who in 1980 coached a bunch of college kids to the "Miracle on Ice" gold-medal win over the Soviets in Lake Placid, has returned to see if he can repeat the feat with rich NHL stars. Get ready to cheer them on at the newly expanded **USAHockey.com**, which is loaded with features, including a basic intro to the sport and its rules, a hockey dictionary, trivia, polls, feature articles from *American Hockey Magazine*, and a store offering the official Olympic jersey.

MIRACLE MEMORY

Speaking of the "Miracle on Ice," wasn't it awesome? Relive the excitement at **CNN/Sports Illustrated: CNNSI.com: A Golden Moment [sportsillustrated.cnn.com/thenetwork/news/2000/02/21/cnnsicomprofile_miracleonice]**. Articles, interviews with team members, photos, and a flashback section make it a noteworthy nostalgia trip.

GOLDEN GIRLS

When women's hockey made its debut as a medal sport four years ago in Nagano, Japan, our girls won the gold. Prepare to cheer on Team USA again at **The Women's Hockey Web [whockey.com]**, an amateur site run by a computer scientist who was a member of Canada's 1994 gold-medal-winning women's hockey squad.

CANUCK PUCK

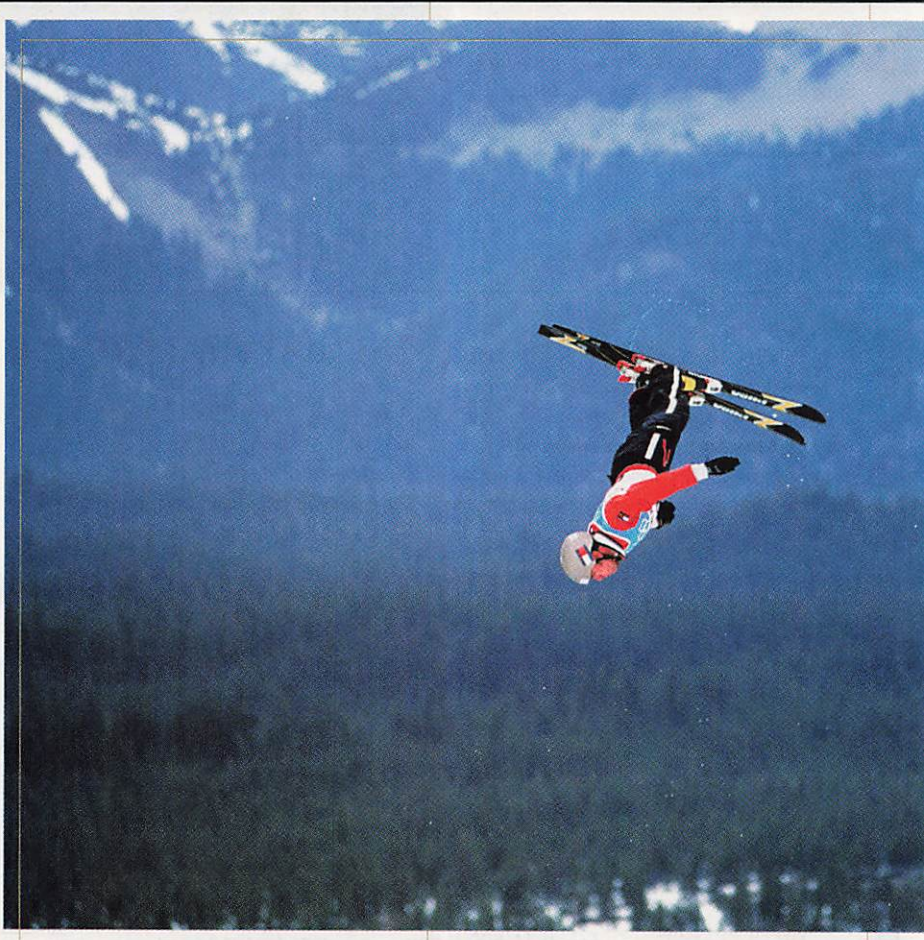
The truest three words in sports: Canadians know hockey. Witness **Slam! Hockey [canoe.ca/Hockey]**, with its deep and broad coverage of the sport, including a strong Olympic section with rosters of the Big Six teams.

ICE THEORY

Hockey players and science geeks don't really mix, but San Francisco's Exploratorium museum's **The Science of Hockey [www.exploratorium.edu/hockey]** is a smart, award-winning site. Learn about the reaction time and reflexes involved in saving a 100-mph shot with the aid of video clips of an NHL goalie.

PAST LEGENDS

The **LegendsofHockey.net** wing of the Hockey Hall of Fame is a just-unveiled site offering loving tributes to past rink greats.



HEAD OVER HEELS Defending freestyle skiing gold medalist Eric "Bergy" Bergoust shows off his back flips, among other awe-inspiring aerial feats, at **Airbergy.com**.

TONY DONALDSON/ICON SMI

FIGURE SKATING

HOME TEAM

For some, it's the grace and athleticism. For others, it's the *schadenfreude*, the sobs, and the rivalries between ice queens. Regardless, figure skating is the Winter Olympics' showcase sport. Get up to speed on this year's team at **U.S. Figure Skating Online [usfsa.org]**, about as slick a national association site as you'll see (thanks to those tall sponsorship dollars). The navigation is a bit odd (tip: use the site map). But if you persevere, you'll find everything you want: news (and an archive), photos and video, team bios, feature articles from *Skating* magazine, and message boards.

SKATING ABROAD

To read up on the international scene, click to the airbrushed yet informative **International Figure Skating [ifsmagazine.com]**. (Note: Does not come with a pronunciation guide for Tchernyshev or Sabovcik.)

GOSSIP ON ICE

Want to dish the dirt? **FSWorld [www.fsworld.com]** has the best figure skating forums, with subjects such as "Surya has been wearing her hair down!" and "Katarina Witt in Calgary!"

LINGO LOWDOWN

Never been sure exactly what a salchow is? Check out the skating glossary at **Miko Masters [mastersmiko.com]**, a French tournament's site. Unintentional-humor alert: We found a section ungracefully translated as "Rundown Skaters," featuring bios on Debi Thomas and others.

Ten things the Net does that TV doesn't

Until the International Olympic Committee fully embraces the Net and permits live online video feeds, surfers won't be able to watch the Games through a browser. But in many other ways, the Net can give you things that television can't.

1. Minority Rules

Fortunately for fans of curling, the Internet is not hostage to the likes and dislikes of mass culture. If you're more interested in brooms and rocks than, say, Axel jumps and camel spins, then drill down into the expansive, event-specific pages at such sites as **CBSSportsLine.com** and **MSN: ESPN [espn.com]**.

2. Be Your Own Cameraman

On television, you see what the producer wants you to see. On the Net, however, you call the shots. At **Salt Lake 2002: Venues [saltlake2002.com/venues/venues.html]**, surfers can explore interactive 360-degree panoramas of the ski slopes, skating rinks, and bobsled tracks.

3. Settling the Scores

Instead of waiting 10 minutes for NBC's score ticker to pop up on the tube, log on to **Salt Lake 2002 [saltlake2002.com]** for event results and news updates.

4. Good News, Bad News

With all due respect to John Tesh and like-minded New Age sportscasters, the superb team of **CNN/SI [cnnsi.com]** analysts (whose columns are posted online) provides more insightful coverage of the events than anyone else in the biz.

5. Always Talk to Strangers

Whether you're convinced that the Russian judge stiffed Michelle Kwan on her long program score or simply want to geek out about fiberglass sleds and G-force speeds with other luge-heads, talk it up online in chatrooms and on message boards.

6. The Live Wire

What's going through the minds of athletes as they experience the thrill of victory or the agony of defeat? Ask for yourself at CNN/SI, where 10 Olympic stars answer surfers' questions via e-mail.

7. Ad Nauseam

Sick of being bombarded by high-volume, ultracheesy spots for "the official laxative of the Olympic Games"? On the Web, ads are fewer, quieter, and easily ignored—or even eliminated altogether. Visit **AdSubtract [adsubtract.com]** to get free ad-blocking software. Nothing like *that* for TV.

8. Hey, Collectors—It's Official

Die-hard collectors who *must* have the official license plate of the 2002 Winter Olympics or the full set of 14-inch Powder, Copper, and Coal mascot dolls should go to the **Salt Lake 2002: Store [store.saltlake2002.com]**. Bargains can be discovered through fans at **rec.sport.olympics** and **rec.collecting.sport.misc** newsgroups, as well as at such sites as **The Olympic Collectors Commission [collectors.olympic.org]**, **Coubertin.com: Olympic Collectors' Auction [www.coubertin.com]**, and, of course, **eBay [ebay.com]**.

9. Trivial Pursuits

History buffs should feel free to lose themselves at such sites as the **Olympic Almanac [www98.pair.com/msmonaco/Almanac]** and **Infoplease.com: Olympics [infoplease.com/ipsa/A0114094.html]**. Every factoid, whether worthy of note or mind-numbingly inane, can be found in these trivia treasure troves.

10. Diary of a Complete Luger

One day, aliens from another galaxy will tune in some of those syrupy-sweet "Up Close and Personal" athlete puff pieces on TV and decide we're not worth contacting after all. Skip 'em, and click instead to MSN: ESPN, **NBCOlympics.com**, and the official **Salt Lake 2002: Athlete's Voice [saltlake2002.com/athletesvoice]**, where you'll find diary entries from the likes of American skier Picabo Street, hockey player Sue Merz, and Russian figure skaters Yelena Berezhnaya and Anton Sikharulidze (minus the long walks and winsome stares into the distance).

THE ALTAR OF KWAN

Every skater should be so lucky as to have a fan like Heather Winfield, whose **Michelle Kwan Fan Page! [heatherw.com/mk]** is as thorough a fan site as a star could hope to have. Kwan, who won the silver in Nagano, is still the brightest hope for U.S. gold. Read all about Kwan and her past performances, and buy the music she's used in her past routines.

FREESTYLE SKIING

HOME TEAM

With insane aerials and pounding moguls, freestyle is one of the Olympics' most exciting sports. Where else do you find icy jumps and slippery twists executed by artistic, airborne athletes competing for judges' (and fans') admiration? We have a good team, too, especially with Eric "Bergy" Bergoust in aerials and Hannah Hardaway and Ann Battelle in bumps. Find out more at **United States Ski Team: Freestyle [usskiteam.com/freestyle/freestyle.htm]**.

NORTHERN CONTENDER

Canada is another freestyle favorite, and the **Canadian Freestyle Ski Association [freestyleski.com]** serves its country well. Founded in 1974, the organization has supported some of Canada's brightest ski stars as freestyle has grown in popularity. The association's site is packed with freestyle history, today's stars, links, and a showcase of past stars in honor of freestyle's 10th anniversary as an Olympic medal sport. Bonus: There's a French version as well, where moguls are called *bosses*.

THE ALTAR OF MOSELEY

Can Jonny Moseley defend the moguls gold medal he won in Nagano four years ago? Some are sure of it; others, doubtful. Make up your own mind and learn more about this American hero at **Jonnymoseley.com**. The site includes everything from video of outstanding athletic feats to photos of Jonny hanging out in bars—and a bio that tells of the athlete's ambition to finish college and host a TV show. Warning to the broadband-challenged: Bring a book to read while the slick Flash animations and video clips load.

ALPINE SKIING

HOME TEAM

U.S. skiing's stated goal for this year's Olympics is 10 medals—a tall order. But with Austrian superman Hermann Maier out after his motorcycle accident and American sensation Picabo Street skiing in her hometown, the stars just might align. The **United States Ski Team [www.usskiteam.com]** is the place to get ready, with news, rankings, bios, photos, past world and U.S. champs, and links galore. Count down to the alpine challenge in the U.S. pursuit of gold.

SKI ZINE

For an unofficial perspective, check out **Ski Racing [skiracing.com]**, the Web site of the magazine that *Sports Illustrated* once described as "the bible of the sport." Recently redesigned, it offers a solid Olympic section, including daily coverage, photos, and a guide to what's on TV when. Read up on Daron Rahlves, one of our hopefuls (who happens to be a former world Jet Ski champion).

SPEED SKATING

HOME TEAM

While there may not appear to be another Eric Heiden or Bonnie Blair on our team this time, the U.S. is still a contender, with Amy Peterson skating in her fifth (and likely final) Olympics. Meet the team at **U.S. Speedskating [usspeedskating.com]**, which also offers news, results, and in-depth commentary from the *Ice Chips* newsletter.

CANADA KUDOS

The best speed skating site comes from up north: **Speed Skating Canada [speedskating.ca]** has a terrific About Speed Skating section, which tells you what "short track" is, recounts the history of the sport, and discusses rules, technique, and equipment.

COMMUNITY

Speedskating.com has news, a records database, and links, plus good interactive and community features such as polls and message boards.

THOSE OTHER SPORTS

When you get sick of watching figure skating on the tube, there are always the underdogs. These sports may not have as much prime-time mass-market appeal, but they can be just as exciting to watch. We recommend learning about them now before Kwan-itis sets in.

SNOWBOARDING

USSnowboard.com [www.ussnowboard.com] has the dope on snowboarding, perhaps the only Olympic sport in which pot has been called a performance-enhancing drug. Newcomers might want to check out the glossary, which defines *boned, Canadian bacon air,* and *chicken salad air.*

SKELETON & BOBSLED

Skeleton returns as a medal sport this year for the first time since 1948. Named after a metal sled that in 1892 reminded people of a skeleton, this sport involves a "slider" lying on his or her stomach on a small sled and going headfirst down a bobsled track at 80 mph. The U.S. has won three of the six Olympic medals ever awarded, and our chances look good this year, too. Your "headfirst source" is **Skeletonsport.com**, with its results, links, and, improbably, more than 3,000 photos. The charmingly named **Fédération Internationale de Bobsleigh et de Tobogganing [bobsleigh.com]** is great for boning up on your skeleton and bobsled details, with info on the history, rules, athletes, and sleds. To read up on the home team, check out the **United States Bobsled & Skeleton Federation [usabobsledandskeleton.org]**.

SHARPSHOOTER Wired Alaskan biathlete Rachel Steer has her sights set on gold. She uses computers to track her trigger pressure and an infrared-sensitive camera to aid her aim.

LUGE

USA Luge [usaluge.org] meets all your luge needs, with info on the Park City track and the U.S. team. It's also the only purveyor of official U.S.A. luge merchandise (so don't fall for all that pirated stuff that's flooding the market).

BIATHLON

Biathlon, the marriage of cross-country skiing and rifle-shooting, has its roots in 18th-century patrols along the Sweden-Norway border. **Allen's Biathlon Page [biathlon.net]** is a classic enthusiast's site: not much to look at, but useful. It offers a good history and links. Another solid site, the **International Biathlon Union [www.ibu.at]**, posts photos and descriptions of the year's key competitions.

CURLING

Curling: It's done on ice, it involves brooms, and it rivals cricket in duration of the matches. That's all we know. But **Curling.com** can teach us much more about this centuries-old sport. The site's voluminous links section includes **CurlingRocks.com, LeCurling.com,** and **GayCurl Canada [gaycurl.ca]**. In the Olympics, there really is something for everybody.

NANCIE BATTAGLIA

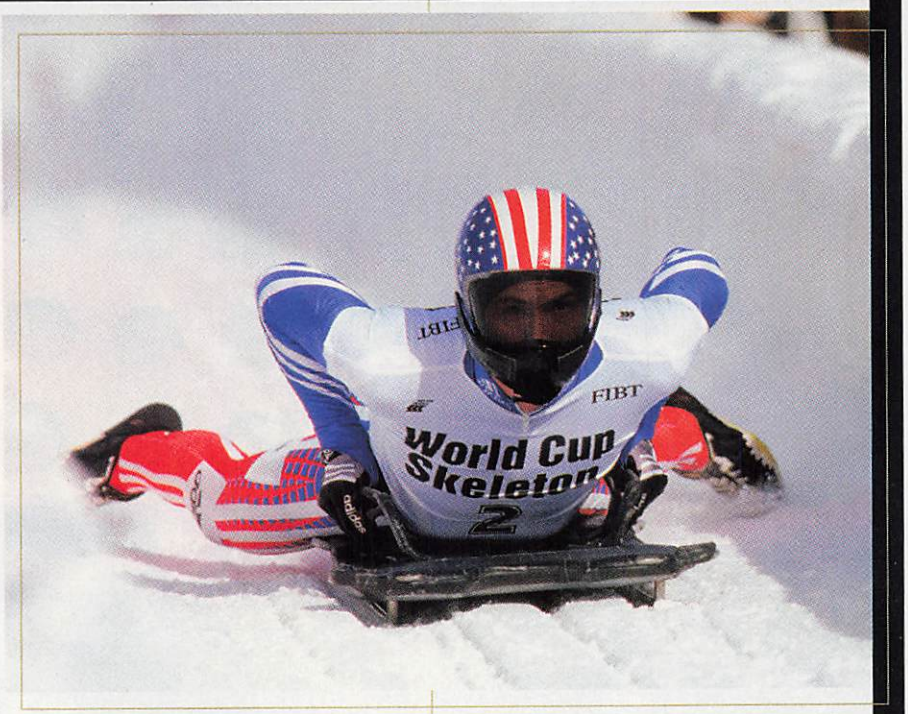
Buzzing Athletes

Meet the most-wired Olympians and the tools that take them to the top of their game

Performance enhancement is the name of the game for would-be Olympians. But with even cold meds and caffeine on the IOC's list of banned substances, Winter hopefuls are relying on a new breed of technological advantages to scoot them along the road to Salt Lake City a few hundredths of a second faster. With tech on their side, athletes can eliminate pain, increase accuracy, or improve race times, then clamber onto the winner's podium drug-free.

Remember belly flopping headfirst onto your red Flexible Flyer? Skeleton is pretty much the same sport (check out **Skeletonsport.com**) except it's done on a mile-long track of ice. At 80-mph speeds. With only 2 inches between your chin and the ground. It all adds up to *verrry* little room for error. Which is why the world's No. 1 skeleton rider, American Lincoln DeWitt (read about him at **U.S. Bobsled and Skeleton Federation: Lincoln DeWitt [usabobsledandskeleton.org/2001bioupdate/lincolndewitt.html]**), took his sled to Sverdrup's Wind Tunnel 8 in Allen Park, Michigan. Against 70-mph winds generated by a fan 22 feet in diameter, DeWitt experimented with some 20 different racing positions on the same equipment that the Ford Motor Company uses to test the aerodynamics of its cars. Engineers shot digital pics of the smoke-enhanced airflow patterns over DeWitt's body, while sensors tracked his lift and drag. "Some of the data completely contradicted commonly held beliefs," says DeWitt. Understandably, he's keeping the specifics supersecret, but this much he'll spill: He has reduced his drag by 10 percent and rejected a helmet that caused too much turbulence.

Come February, fellow American slider Jean Racine will be equally turbulence-free for the Olympic debut of women's bobsled. "Other sleds look like Cavaliers next to our Viper," says Jen Davidson, Racine's former partner. Racine's Bo-Dyn sled is an 800-pound, state-of-the-art flying machine designed by Bob Cuneo of Chassis Dynamics, who has built everything from NASCAR champ Geoff Bodine's race cars to a working oil rig in a Tahoe casino. Computer modeling software such as CadKey allowed him to make subtle changes to the outer shell that mean Racine will be steering a pretty aerodynamic beast this season. Good luck, Jean. Just remember: The hard part is stopping.



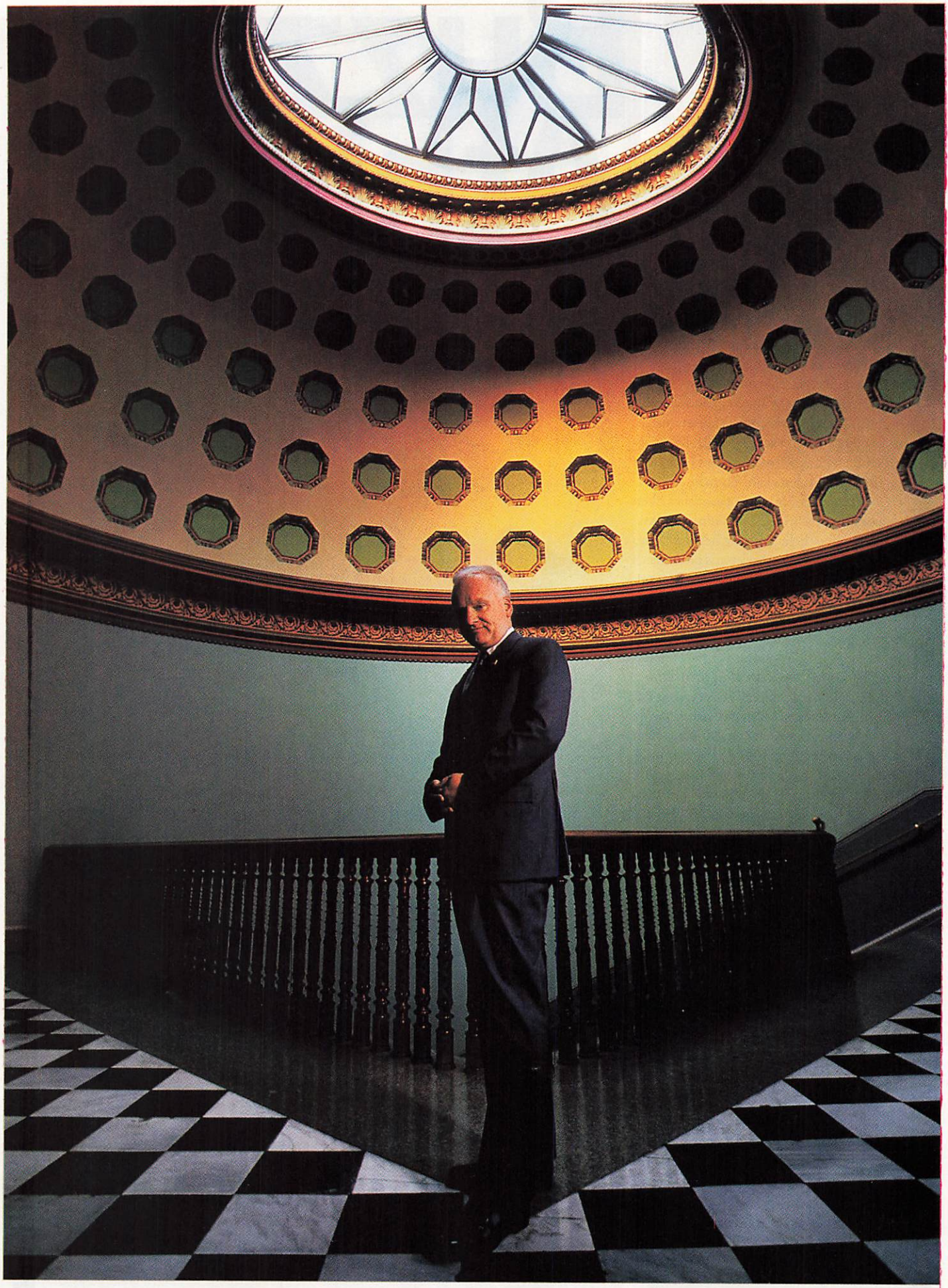
SPEEDY SKELETON Lincoln DeWitt reduced the drag on his sled by 10 percent after experimenting with new technologies and about 20 different racing positions. It didn't, however, make him any less insane.

Training in her hometown of Anchorage, among other places, biathlete Rachel Steer (whose progress you can follow at **United States Biathlon Association [usbiathlon.com]**) hasn't always depended on the Olympic Training Centers in the lower 48. Thanks to innovations such as the Arkray Lactate Pro LT-1710 from **Fact Canada Consulting Ltd. [fact-canada.com]**, she hasn't had to. No bigger than a Palm-Pilot, the device lets Steer prick a finger and analyze her lactic acid levels during exercise, allowing her to adjust the intensity of her cross-country skiing program as her regimen demands. To help increase the speed and accuracy of her shooting, she uses a portable lab equipped with an infrared-sensitive camera (to pick up the laser sight below the barrel of her rifle). Computers gauge her trigger pressure and map her rifle's circular motion. Digital video of the session ends up on a CD that Steer can pop into her laptop whenever she wants to assess her performance.

Aerialist Eric Bergoust (whose site is at **Airbergy.com**) is so obsessed with twisting and flipping off 70-degree snow ramps 50 feet in the air that the defending Olympic freestyle skiing champ totes his own chain saw to competitions to sculpt the kickers. Check Bergy's self-run site for MPEG footage of his quadruple-twisting quadruple flips, which he perfects by spending summers at Utah Olympic Park hucking himself off plastic-lined jumps into a pool of water. If you're amped enough to try flying, yourself, Bergy tells you how to fiberglass your own skis, including safety tips and helpful hints, such as "Use a fat permanent marker to write something cool on your glass job, like 'Super Duty Tough' or 'Beefy.'" Sound advice from a chain saw-wielding maniac.

BY ANNE MARIE CRUZ

DOUG PENSINGER/ALLSPORT



top cybercop

RICHARD A. CLARKE, THE SPECIAL ADVISER TO THE PRESIDENT FOR CYBERSPACE SECURITY, ON THE THREAT OF CYBERTERRORISM, WEAPONS OF MASS DISRUPTION, C-3PO, AND THE POWER OF 14-YEAR-OLD HACKERS

AS SURELY AS AMERICA'S BRIDGES, SKYSCRAPERS, AND AIRPLANES are vulnerable to attacks from terrorists, so is the infrastructure of cyberspace. Telecommunications hubs. Power grids. Financial institutions. Any of them could be hit. Airports could be closed; telephone systems shut down. Communities might experience power outages. Richard A. Clarke had been warning people for years. But after September 11, they started listening.

In October, President Bush named this 28-year veteran of government service Special Adviser to the President for Cyberspace Security. Clarke's mission: to develop a plan for protecting the nation's digital infrastructure. Americans, he says, are now "dependent" on the Internet; there's no way we can go back to the predigital way of shopping, communicating, and doing business.

While intelligence gathered on alleged terrorist mastermind Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaeda network indicates that such groups have not yet carried out cyberterrorism, Clarke believes such attacks are indeed possible. According to the National Security Council, al-Qaeda uses the Internet to train, to proselytize, to recruit, to pass messages along for operational planning. They use it the same way we do. It's only a matter of time, Clarke warns, before someone tries to use this technology against us.

Clarke has served seven administrations—in three, he held positions in the White House. He's made his career in national security, and he served as assistant secretary of state under the elder George Bush. Under Bill Clinton, Clarke became the nation's first counterterrorism chief in the executive branch. Currently, he also chairs the President's Critical Infrastructure Protection Board—the cyber security board, for short. *Y-Life* sat down for a talk with Clarke at the end of an eventful year.

Y-LIFE **You've warned of a "digital Pearl Harbor." What do you mean by that phrase?**

CLARKE Digital Pearl Harbor means a surprise attack that goes after one of our existing vulnerabilities and has an extreme impact on the country. It could be on our military. It could be on our economy. It could be both. The difference between Pearl Harbor and whatever might come in a cyber attack is that Pearl Harbor was 5,000 miles from where we sit. And it was one city. A digital attack is probably going to be nationwide.

Y-LIFE **Describe a possible scenario for the cyber equivalent of 9/11.**

CLARKE First of all, it's inappropriate to compare anything that could happen in cyberspace to September 11. We had more than 3,000 people die on September 11. I can't imagine a cyber event that's going to directly lead to 3,000 people dying. The worst-case scenario is for a group or a nation-state to stage sophisticated attacks. I mean *sophisticated* in two ways: by the type of targets they choose, and by the techniques they deploy. A sophisticated set of targets is hit simultaneously, and sophisticated attack techniques are used. There are questions in my mind, and in a lot more experts' minds, about whether or not the Net can withstand some of these attacks.

Y-LIFE **Are we talking about telecommunications targets or power grids and financial institutions?**

CLARKE All of the above. There's a series of interdependencies that we don't fully understand between financial institutions, electric power grids, oil and gas pipelines, telecommunications, the Internet. Probably you could throw into that mix transportation, too, and maybe emergency services. The owners and operators of those infrastructures are beginning to talk with us about their concerns about how they interact. But none of us has a model that will indicate what the interactions are, or what the pressure points are. One of the things we're going to do is create a national center for simulation of the interdependencies.

Y-LIFE **Before September 11, some people thought you were like Chicken Little, warning about possible attacks. How do they treat you now?**

CLARKE I think everyone is more aware that worst-case scenarios sometimes happen, and that the reason you develop worst-case scenarios is not to stretch your imagination or justify your budget, but to begin to design a risk-mitigation strategy. We do have enemies. They're sophisticated. They use our technology against us. They know as much about our technology as we do. We would be mistaken to underestimate them. Al-Qaeda will hopefully soon be destroyed. But we'll have enemies again, because we're the world's only remaining superpower and because we stand for civil rights and civil liberties.

Y-LIFE **Have you actually found evidence of organized terror online?**

CLARKE There is a lot of inferential evidence that people are looking for vulnerabilities on our networks and in our critical nodes. Sometimes you get an idea of who those people are, and sometimes they achieve a certain degree of anonymity. It would be a mistake to assume that nation-states are not currently engaged in reconnaissance of our networks.

Y-LIFE **Are you going to name names?**

CLARKE No.

Y-LIFE **Should the U.S. government be counterattacking using the same methods?**

CLARKE That's not going to save us. We are much more digitally dependent. It's a dependency in the real sense: We can't do without it. We can't go back to the predigital age.

X BY ELIZABETH WASSERMAN

Photographed by Robert Trippett

Y-LIFE There have been reports that the FBI is developing a software program—on the Internet it's known as Magic Lantern—to use as a Trojan horse to track the keystrokes of terrorists.

CLARKE (*Laughs*) Not that I'm aware of. There are lots of urban legends. Magic Lantern is not one of the stories I've seen. [*Ed. Note: In December, after this interview was conducted, the FBI acknowledged that the U.S. government is working on spying technology, code-named Magic Lantern, to eavesdrop on computer communications of suspected criminals. At press time, Clarke had not responded to follow-up questions.*]

Y-LIFE What about Echelon, the so-called global surveillance network that tracks electronic communication?

CLARKE It's not my job, so I can't answer the question. But I expect that a lot of that is legend.

Y-LIFE But government law enforcement agencies are developing these types of capabilities, aren't they?

CLARKE Government agencies need—with court orders and under the law—to be able to investigate both computer crimes and crimes in which computers are used. They're two different things.

Y-LIFE Many Net users question whether these tools will be used to penetrate computers belonging to U.S. citizens or businesses.

CLARKE No. Not at all. What we're trying to do is achieve a level of security where people feel their privacy is being protected. The United States government has a lot of responsibility for protecting the privacy of citizens under the Privacy Act of 1974 and under the law in general. You cannot have privacy in a modern society unless you have computer security. If I can hack my way into your bank or your veteran's record or your food-stamp record, then you don't have privacy.

Y-LIFE You're interested in limiting some forms of anonymity online. What do you have in mind?

CLARKE We need to have spaces inside cyberspace where anonymity is the rule. And we need to have spaces in cyberspace where is it not. If I go into the Fairfax County Public Library and wander the bookshelves, I should be anonymous. If I go in to the George Washington University Medical Center and wander the shelves of the medical-records office, I should not be anonymous.

Y-LIFE Do you support wider use of encryption? Wouldn't that keep hackers from gaining access to a lot of the information we're talking about?

CLARKE Encryption is not a silver bullet. A lot of people think that if I encrypt my data or I have a firewall or I have an intrusion detection device, I've solved the problem. People think that if they've installed a virtual private network they've solved the problem. It's good. It's a step. It's one of the things you need to do. It's certainly not a large percentage of the solution.

Y-LIFE To better protect the federal government, you've proposed GovNet, a kind of super-intranet...

CLARKE Government agencies already have nonpublicly accessed intranets. Let's find a way to bundle together their buying power and have enough capacity so at that point we can afford a private line. There are government agencies now with private lines. There are private sector companies with private lines. They're expensive. And the question we're asking is, can we bundle government buying power by pooling together the existing intranets and putting them on one network that would be a private line?

Y-LIFE Can you keep this system secure? Do you trust every government employee? Look at Robert Hanssen [the FBI agent who, accused of spying for the Soviet Union and Russia, pleaded guilty].

CLARKE We don't trust every government employee. Neither should every network operator trust everybody who has access to their network. What you need to do is build in controls and monitors. There are a whole series of things one can do. Scan at the packet level for malicious code and for viruses and worms. Use programs like the one Raytheon developed, SilentRunner, to monitor behavior patterns and detect anomalies. Have policy enforcement bots go out over the entire network and ensure there is no connection in violation of policy, like a wireless laptop connected to the network, or even a new printer that isn't authorized.

Y-LIFE One of the controversial ideas you proposed during the Clinton administration was FIDNet [the Federal Intrusion Detection Network], described as a network that could track users' financial information and other data in order to discover criminal behavior.

CLARKE It was described as that. It never was that. FIDNet was the following simple idea: that we put intrusion detection systems on federal government computers and pool the results of their detection. We have done step one; we have put intrusion detection systems on most federal government computers. We have not yet done step two, which is to pool the results. It's important that when you talk about FIDNet, you understand that a series of strange bedfellows created it as a straw man, defined it as something it was not, and then attacked it.

Y-LIFE Yes, civil liberties groups jumped all over FIDNet, charging that the government wanted to pry into the private lives of workers. Has that taught you anything about the user community you're dealing with?

CLARKE It has taught me that a lot of people don't trust government. A lot of people assume that government would do things that those of us in government are shocked at the very idea of. I've spent over 25 years in government, and I've never seen anybody propose to do some of these things. People will assume the worst and misconstrue a proposal, and then that misconstrued proposal takes on a life of its own.

Y-LIFE How did you develop an interest in this area?

CLARKE I had a lot of jobs in the government where my responsibility was to understand, in as much depth as possible, a technical issue and act as a translator to explain it to policy people. You can think of me as C-3PO. On one hand, you have the technical people who have very little policy ability. On the other hand, you have policy people who have math phobia. The result of this dichotomy means that frequently we don't have good public policy on technical issues.

Y-LIFE Up until now, most computer hackers could probably be described as "weapons of mass annoyance." Aren't these attacks the work of 14-year-old disgruntled youths?

CLARKE Don't sell the 14-year-olds short. We had a 14-year-old last year who got control of the dams on the Colorado River and could have flooded places. We had a 14-year-old four years ago who got control of the Worchester, Massachusetts, airport flight tower. We had two 14-year-olds in February 1998 hack their way into every Air Force base in the United States. So 14-year-olds should not be considered the low end on the threat spectrum. There is a spectrum, from people who just want to do vandalism—spray-paint in cyberspace—to people who are engaged in industrial espionage, fraud, extortion, up to nation-states engaged in espionage. They are potentially putting plans in place for not weapons of mass annoyance, but weapons of mass disruption.

Y-LIFE Short of rebuilding the Internet from scratch, it seems that many of your proposals for increased security are just Band-Aids on the problem. Is there anything beyond that that can work?

CLARKE Yes, we're putting a lot of Band-Aids on. But we're working with industry to envision what the network will look like three to five years from now. We have the rough outlines of what cyberspace is going to look like three years from now. We need to push the envelope a bit more and get a better idea what it's going to look like five years from now. Then we need to drill down and fix the vulnerabilities before they occur. ■

Elizabeth Wasserman is the former Washington bureau chief of *The Industry Standard* and used to cover technology for the *San Jose Mercury News*.

AN EXTENDED VERSION OF THIS INTERVIEW CAN BE FOUND AT YIL.COM/CLARKE

web guide

WHERE TO, HOW TO, BEST OF: OUR MONTHLY GUIDE TO LIFE ON THE WEB EDITED BY CREE McCREE

MICHIKO: NICHOLAS DA SILVA AND RONNY FUAD

EYEING THE FUTURE OF FLASH

Flash animation has come a long way since the heyday of the blinking banner ad. At **I Want My Flash TV (iwantmyflashtv.com)**, hosted by cyberbabe Michiko (above), you'll find a terrific array of short films in every genre from action to westerns. Though a broadband connection speeds up downloads, Flash doesn't require fat pipes. And even surfers with 14.4K modems will find plenty to feast their eyes on in New, Notable & Fun's "Flash Me" on page 81.

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WHAT'S HOT — AND COOL — ON THE WEB THIS MONTH

BY MEAGHAN O'NEILL

RELAUNCH

CNNMoney If financial news rules your day, bookmark this synergistic fusion of CNNfn and *Money* magazine. Look for investment advice and interactive "best" guides from the print publication's editors, plus the breaking news and market coverage you expect from CNN. **[money.cnn.com]**

Fox Sports A streamlined redesign allows fans to go to a specific sport by clicking on its icon, or access scores and headlines from the home page. Enter your ZIP code for local TV listings. **[foxsports.com]**

ABCNews.com In collaboration with RealNetworks GoldPass service, ABC News has launched a streaming subscription service. For $9.95 a month, you can catch *World News Tonight, Nightline,* and other programs online. Nonsubscribers can still access standard site content. **[abcnews.com]**

Hotwire The travel industry has taken a hit over the past several months, but great deals still abound. Use Hot-Fares and Hot-Rates at this redesigned site to find them. **[hotwire.com]**

COMMUNITIES

Radio Free Nation This open forum is to American politics what Slashdot is to technology. Devoted to expanding the views expressed by mass media, the RFN motto is "If you have a story, we have a soapbox." Editors and users submit comments and links to articles, with moderators monitoring the community. **[radiofreenation.com]**

I'm Right You're Wrong Who needs a "licensed verbal pugilist" (read: lawyer) to fight for you when you can post your case here and be judged by a jury of your cyberpeers? Trials include trivial spats between roommates, lovers, and brothers; settlements in the form of gifts are available at the Bailiff Boutique. **[imright.com]**

PORTAL PATROL

AT&T wireless customers can now use Google [google.com] to access 5 million WAP-ready pages via cell phone. Also new at the site: You can sound off on search engine pros and cons in a newsgroup discussion dedicated to the site itself.

Are you looking for a bargain? If so, try Yahoo! Warehouse [warehouse.yahoo.com], the portal's newest spot for discounted goods. Also: Customize Internet Explorer 6.0 for Yahoo! Messenger, searches, and games—all in one fell swoop—at Yahoo! Essentials [essentials.yahoo.com].

Lycos has hooked up with Paramount Domestic Television to produce the online arm of Rendez-View [rview.lycos.com], the syndicated TV show about dating. Hit the site this Valentine's Day for advice, romantic outtakes, and bloopers.

SPOTLIGHT

AFGHAN BOY LOOKING FOR SOLACE: YOUSSEF KOHZAD

ANOTHER WORLD

Since September 11, most of us have learned a lot more about Afghanistan than we ever did in school. But what we see on the nightly news tells only half the story. **Lemar-Aftaab [afghanmagazine.com]**, published by Afghan American Farhad Azad, celebrates indigenous arts and culture. In one compelling account, we meet Herat's leading folk musicians living in exile in Iran. What does Afghan music sound like? Tune in **RadioAfghanistan.com [radioafghanistan.com]** to hear the contemporary songs and traditional wedding music that are now being played in public once again. On another front, the **Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan [rawa.org]** rages on. The latest interactive maps at **NationalGeographic.com: Understanding Afghanistan: Land in Crisis [nationalgeographic.com/landincrisis]** delineate recent military attacks, refugee camps, and regional vegetation. The mountainous countryside can be astoundingly beautiful; Douglas R. Powell captures the magic at **Images of Afghanistan in 1976–78 [geoimages.berkeley.edu/geoimages/powell/powellafghan.html]**.

MUSIC

Dismuke's Virtual Talking Machine In hopes of creating "a new generation of enthusiasts" for early 20th-century popular music, the creator of this site transcribed records from his own collection into streaming Real Audio. Download jazz, blues, and swing tracks or listen to entire playlists. **[dismuke.org]**

Lone Star Music Born in Austin, Texas, this soulful site bills itself as "the unofficial capital of Texas music on the Web" and covers old favorites such as Willie Nelson and Lyle Lovett, as well as up-and-comers such as the Weary Boys and the Asylum Street Spankers. Shop for 500 artists; sample more than 5,000 songs. **[lonestarmusic.com]**

ANIMALS

The Scoop: DogsInTheNews.com The pooches spotlighted here aren't merely man's best friend—they've foiled robbers and saved their owners from hungry bears. Don't miss the touching photo galleries of the brave canines who worked at ground zero with the World Trade Center rescue and recovery teams. **[dogsinthenews.com]**

Living Jewels Entomologist Poul Beckmann reinvents Beetlemania with his stunning photos of the colorful insects. Click on any of the hard-to-pronounce critters for full-screen body shots. We think they're natural works of art. If you agree, you can order books and posters online. **[living-jewels.com]**

RELATIONSHIPS

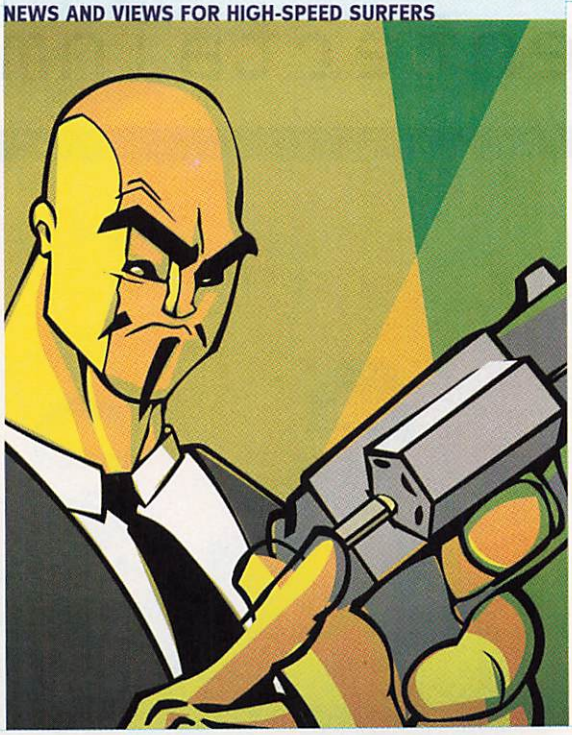
RevengeLady.com Speaking of bugs, in one of the many instant-karma tales posted at RevengeLady, a devilishly creative scorned woman claims to have loosed 1,000 crickets into her ex's house. If you've suffered through a breakup (or enjoy other people's pain), this site might cheer you up. Not sure if vengeance is in your blood? Take the Revenge Quiz and find out. **[revengelady.com]**

Girlshop: Margo Manhattan Boutique Been hit by Cupid's arrow lately? In the spirit of Valentine's Day, show your gal you think she's sweet with silver and gold heart jewelry. Then browse in **Guyshop [guyshop.com]** for something you might like for yourself. **[girlshop.com/shop/girls/mj/margo_manhattan.asp]**

MANUEL OVERRIDE: DAN EDWARDS/WWW.ART-BARN.COM; BEETLES: POUL BECKMANN; BLUEBIRD: COURTESY OF DISMUKE

THE FAT PIPE

NEWS AND VIEWS FOR HIGH-SPEED SURFERS



FLASH ME

Flash animation has been used for years to put a little movement on otherwise boring Web pages (and, we should add, to make banner ads blink annoyingly). Digital artists have embraced the format and are creating increasingly complex and beautiful animation. Now they have a place to show off their work. You can see great examples in 18 categories, from action and comedy to experimental and sci-fi, at **I Want My Flash TV [iwantmyflashtv.com]**. Most of the movies are only a few minutes long, and they download in just seconds using your fast connection. Not for the faint of heart: the noir graphics of Dan Edwards' *Manuel Override* (above).

More than 4 million college kids have on-campus access to the high jinks of the Zilo TV network, which features shows such as *Get Stupid* (watch spring breakers eat sand for $50), *You Know You Want...* (go behind the scenes at the NBA All-Star Game), and *Slapnuts Comedy Hour*. Those who can't watch on television can head to **Zilo [zilo.com]**, where highlights of all the programming are available, along with online games, music-video clips, and high-end streaming media, all optimized for broadband. In the mood for even more laughs? Check out the video downloads at Zilo's popular **CollegeHumor.com**. DON WILLMOTT

TRENDSPOTTING BY BILGE EBIRI

OUR FAVORITE THINGS

Revolutionary software breaks down musical tastes

Remember the early days of Napster? Sure, it was fun to get all those free tunes, but the real "wow" aspect of the program was the ability to discover new music and expand our tastes, something the music industry conveniently forgot in its jihad against file-swapping. But that discovery was also largely dependent on interacting with other users—a decidedly unscientific process. A little program called **DigitalMC [digitalmc.com]**, however, may very well take musical matchmaking to the next level.

Developed by a physicist and a team of technologists, DigitalMC breaks each piece of music down into a series of algorithms and comes up with a "descriptor" for it that pinpoints its essential features. The program then uses that information to find other tunes that match a user's tastes. People respond differently to the way notes rise and fall, or to particular types of voices or specific rhythms. Once the program determines our preferences, it can deliver pieces of music that share those characteristics. It's a truly revolutionary step in connectivity—the ability to discover new music based not on other consumers' choices but on the scientific building blocks of personal musical taste.

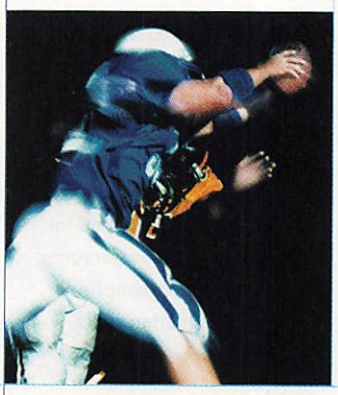
So how do you snag DigitalMC software? Well, you can't—not exactly. DigitalMC is meant for use by streaming radio and subscription services, such as **MusicNet [musicnet.com]** and the allegedly upcoming **Pressplay [pressplay.com]**. The program is designed to profile the songs you're listening to and then match them to songs in the databases of those services. If we're lucky, eventually DigitalMC will be readily available.

FOOTBALL

SUPER BOWL XXXVI

END ZONE

Super Bowl XXXVI For most of the year, the NFL's official Super Bowl site serves as an archive of past contests. But approaching game time—this year it's scheduled for February 3 at the Louisiana Superdome in New Orleans—the site again becomes an interactive hub. The lineup features a rush of special guests, live Webcasts, audio feeds, and RealVideo highlights, as well as the popular online vote for the game's most valuable player. Don't want to miss a second of the action when you take a bathroom break? Download the Super Bowl Live PQA and HotSync it to your Palm. **[superbowl.com]**



BIG GAME, BIG EASY

SuperBowlXXXVI.org Besides the millions glued to their tubes, PC screens, and handhelds, there are a lucky 76,000 who get to watch the game at the stadium. The Greater New Orleans Sports Foundation welcomes all pigskin pilgrims here, with details on pregame events and a link to the Superdome's own site. Want to take full advantage of America's premier party town? Request a print copy of the Good Times Guide, which is packed with discount coupons to local attractions, along with maps and a calendar of events. **[www.superbowlxxxvi.org]**

FIRST DOWN THE HATCH

Epicurious: Super Bowl Had it with light beer and greasy nachos? Epicurious provides dozens of recipes for alternative fare, such as prosciutto-wrapped scampi, avocado-mango salsa, and three-cheese pizza with onion and sage. Check Chili Scenes of Winter for 28 fiery stews, both traditional (pork and bean) and gourmet (chicken cashew). **[epicurious.com/e_eating/e04_superbowl/superbowl.html]** DONALD MILLER

MUSICIANS: JOHN SANNI/GETTYONE; FOOTBALL: SEAN MURPHY/GETTYONE

BOOKS

QUEENS OF CRIME

GRANDE DAME

Agatha Christie Not only does the founding mother of the modern crime genre remain one of the best-selling novelists of all time, but her work has also been adapted for film, TV, and the stage. So it's only fitting that she would conquer the Net, too (albeit from beyond the grave). Match wits with the author by trying to solve an interactive mystery based on her popular Miss Marple series. Hooked on crime? Hop over to sister site **MysteryNet.com**, where online whodunits abound. **[agathachristie.com]**

G IS FOR GRAFTON

Sue Grafton In her alphabet series, this prolific writer is already up to the letter *P*—her latest book is *P Is for Peril*. And the notes she's posted online for *H Is for Hazardous* offer insight into the writer's mind. But some of the site's juiciest facts can be found under *F*, for *food*. While Grafton's danger doll, Kinsey Millhone, is partial to peanut-butter-and-pickle sandwiches, the author favors gourmet recipes. The Killer Cheesecake, with its buttery graham-cracker crust and creamy-sweet top layer, sounds particularly scrumptious. **[suegrafton.com]**

BODY OF EVIDENCE

PatriciaCornwell.com Forensic scientist Kay Scarpetta, star of Cornwell's chart-topping mystery novels, is a no-nonsense dame—not unlike her feisty creator, who once worked in a medical examiner's office. Cornwell's official site was closed for renovation at press time, but once it is relaunched, a food fight could erupt between her and Grafton; Cornwell's *Food to Die For: Secrets From Kay Scarpetta's Kitchen* is touted on the splash page. **[patriciacornwell.com]**

PAMELA DES BARRES

GUEST GUIDE

NINE INCH NAILS' TRENT REZNOR

As the mastermind behind tech rockers **Nine Inch Nails [nin.com]**, Trent Reznor is known for his computer skills. He recently took a break from his CD/VHS/DVD project *Nine Inch Nails Live: And All That Could Have Been* to talk about his favorite sites.

VERSIONTRACKER.COM We do everything in the studio on Macintosh computers, and all the software uses about a hundred plug-ins. I go here for updates. **[versiontracker.com]**

BLUE'S NEWS I'm a big video game fan, so I often check in with this site to see what developers like [Quake creator] John Carmack are working on. **[bluesnews.com]**

DARK HORIZONS One of the better movie sites. It has news stories like when something blows up on the set of *Men in Black II*. **[darkhorizons.com]**

HOT OR NOT We're always looking for distractions, so we spend a lot of time on this site. We even posted a picture of someone who works here in the studio without him knowing, and spent the day tracking the votes he got. Of course, we altered the picture with Photoshop. **[hotornot.com]** PAUL SEMEL

MOVIES

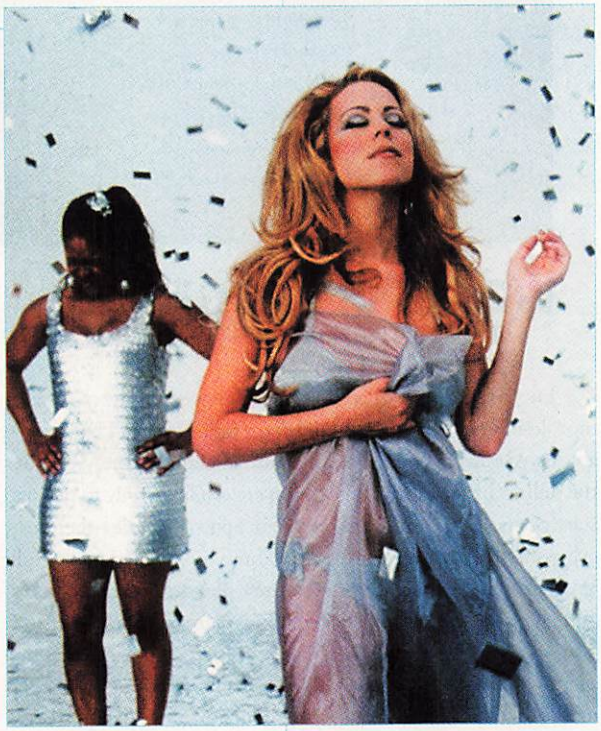
FILM REVIEWS

BUSHELS OF VIEWS

Rotten Tomatoes "A terrific thriller!" raves one critic about *From Hell*. "Overripe melodrama," another complains. Opposing points of view clash frequently at this colorful site, which uses a Tomatometer to rate movies as "fresh" or "rotten," based on the consensus of dozens of reviewers from media outlets large and small. Don't agree with the pros? Pitch a few of your own ripe fruits at the public message boards. **[rottentomatoes.com]**

BIG KAHUNAS

MRQE: Movie Review Query Engine; Metacritic The no-frills MRQE, one of *Y-Life*'s 100 Best Sites for 2002, lets you access critiques of just about every movie ever made: More than 25,000 domestic and foreign films have been assessed by a prodigious cast of global opinion-makers. Slick Metacritic, geared to new releases, averages the scores of America's most influential critics, with review summaries that cut to the chase. Users can chime in, too. **[www.mrqe.com]; [metacritic.com]**

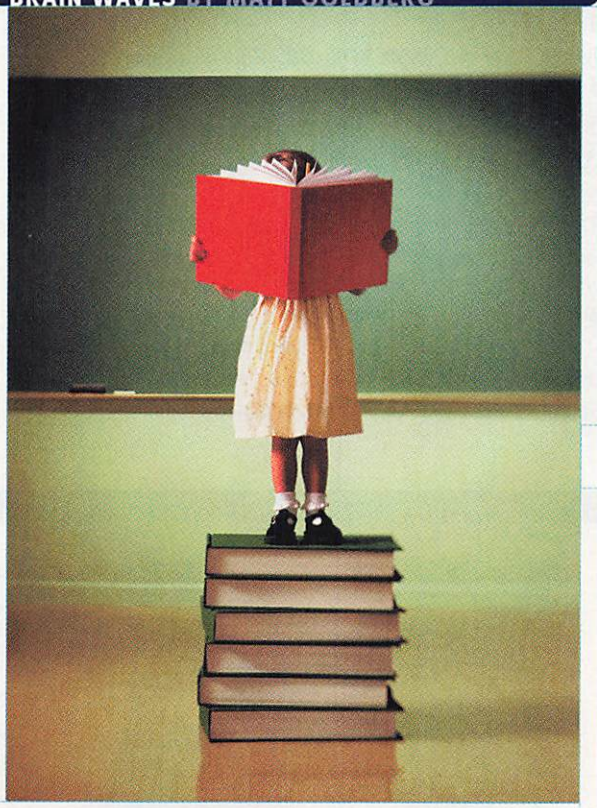


CAREY IN *GLITTER*: 20TH CENTURY FOX/NEWSCOM; REZNOR: KEVIN WESTENBERG/NOTHING RECORDS

BOSS CHICK

The Flick Filosopher Would that every dinner-party guest were as clever as MaryAnn Johanson, "girl movie critic" (and *Y-Life* regular), who digs into films with gusto and finesse. Brandishing a knowledge and a love of moviemaking that are as deep as they are wide, she is never gratuitously mean but is often wickedly funny. Thus she thanks Mariah Carey for giving us the widely panned *Glitter* (above) in mid-September so that we could laugh hard "when we needed it most, in this, our darkest hour." **[flickfilosopher.com]** ANN FARMER

BRAIN WAVES BY MATT GOLDBERG



WORKS IN PROGRESS

Open-source encyclopedias invite contributions

Encyclopedias have come a long way since the days of traveling salesmen hawking expensive sets of bulky books. The venerable *Encyclopædia Britannica* has long since migrated to the Web, but the online archives at **Britannica.com** are available only to paying subscribers (there is a 14-day free trial). Spurred by the belief that everyone should have free access to human knowledge, several Web sites are taking a cue from the open-source movement and inviting users to help create online reference works.

Nupedia.com uses a peer-review process, led in many cases by specialists with doctorates in their field. Its academic approach necessarily constrains the pace of production; in its first year and a half on the Web, Nupedia has published about two dozen completed articles. But many more works "in progress" are posted on the site, on subjects ranging from polymerase chain-reaction mutagenesis to Paul McCartney. As part of the open-review process, anyone can submit feedback about the drafts.

Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia [wikipedia.com] takes the collaborative concept even further, allowing visitors to edit posted works. Because of its more freewheeling format, Wikipedia already boasts more than 16,000 articles, although it lacks Nupedia's quality control. **Everything2 [everything2.com]**, created by the folks who founded famed techie hangout **Slashdot [slashdot.org]**, has been described as a cross between Dungeons & Dragons and a creative writing seminar, with members authoring pieces on everything from computer programming to psychedelic drugs. When their work is rated highly by other users, contributors gain "experience points," which allow them to acquire increasing levels of control over the site itself. Ultimately, Everything2 is more of a community than a research-worthy reference. But if the other online encyclopedias can create equally passionate audiences, they may achieve their goals.

FINE ARTS

PHOTO GALLERIES

HOTSHOTS

Masters of Photography Works by 52 acknowledged masters of the medium range from evocative landscapes by Ansel Adams to harrowing portraits of the poor by Dorothea Lange. Although contemporary photography gets short shrift, Robert Mapplethorpe's gay icons, Garry Winogrand's edgy dreamscapes, and Cindy Sherman's masquerades are considered classics. **[masters-of-photography.com]**

X-RAY SPECS

Man Ray From intimate portraits of Igor Stravinsky, Gertrude Stein, James Joyce, and other peers to the abstract experiments with light he called "rayograms," Man Ray's pictures are essential documents of modernism. More than 1,000 images are indexed here. **[www.manray-photo.com]**

FILM NOIR

Weegee's World Although the cops and crooks who were his favorite subjects considered him little more than a pesky tabloid photographer, Arthur Fellig's shots of New York City's underbelly in the 1930s and '40s are classics of hard-boiled art on a par with the novels of Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett. Take a stroll after dark with the cigar-chomping shutterbug (pictured at left). **[www.icp.org/weegee]**

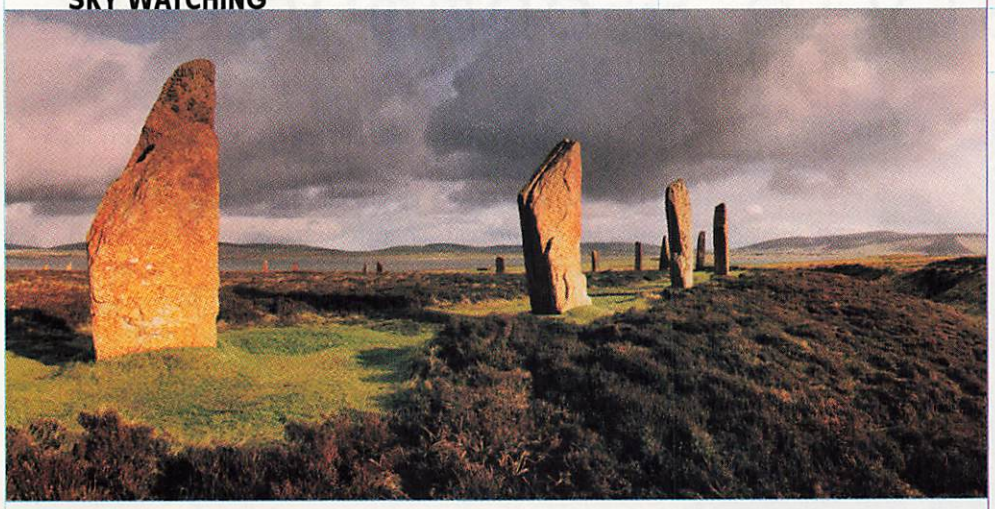
WORLD TOUR

ZoneZero With its images of sublime beauty and surreal visions of horror, this international collection of contemporary photography is one of the best available online. Flash animations and audio files of artists speaking about their work enliven the visuals. **[zonezero.com]** FRANK GREEN

CLASSROOM: STEPHEN SWINTEK/GETTYONE; WEEGEE: © WEEGEE/INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY/GETTYONE

ASTRONOMY

SKY WATCHING



STAR BUILDERS Ancient astronomers used precise calculations to build such sites as the Ring of Brodgar in the Orkney Islands.

STARGAZING 101

Earth & Sky Radio Series The online companion to the award-winning science radio program posts a daily chart of celestial events. Tonight's Sky points out stars, constellations, and planets visible from the Northern Hemisphere. How-to primers, a pronunciation guide, and a FAQ are all great for fledgling astronomers. **[earthsky.com]**

CUSTOM GUIDE

www.Skycalendar.com Possibly the most exciting invention since the telescope, the My Sky Calendar feature allows you to create your own field guide to the universe by plugging in your longitude, latitude, and time zone. Find planets and constellations, or track local and global celestial events, including sunrise, sunset, lunar phases, and visibility. **[skycalendar.com]**

LUNAR NOTES

Inconstant Moon A guide to the ever-changing appearance of Earth's celestial companion, Inconstant Moon offers nightly lunar tours. Choose a date on the calendar to explore features visible from Earth that night. **[inconstantmoon.com]**

ANCIENT COSMOLOGY

Archaeoastronomy Ancient civilizations looked to the skies for clues to life on earth. Take a virtual tour of astronomically significant archaeological sites, including England's Stonehenge and Peru's Machu Picchu, and learn about the stellar mythologies of the people who built them. **[library.thinkquest.org/C0118421]** ALEXIS ADAMS

EXPERT OPINION

ANTIQUES ROADSHOW HOST DAN ELIAS

Collectors bring their family heirlooms and flea market finds to Elias, the master appraiser who sorts out treasure from trash as the host of **Antiques Roadshow [pbs.org/roadshow]**. Here, the proprietor of Elias Fine Art in Boston unearths some real jewels online:

AIC: THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR CONSERVATION OF HISTORIC AND ARTISTIC WORKS Learn how to care for everything from old photographs and rare books to landmark buildings. **[aic.stanford.edu]**

WINTERTHUR Henry du Pont's Delaware house has been turned into a museum that specializes in American fine art, decorative arts, and furniture from before 1860. **[winterthur.org]**

THE PEW CHARITABLE TRUSTS: CULTURAL POLICY The stories we talk about on the show are fun. But the thinking that goes into making objects is overlooked in the education system. The Pew Charitable Trusts are exploring what impact the cultural and artists' sectors have on the U.S. economy. **[pewtrusts.com/ideas/index.cfm?issue=20]** HEIDI LAFLECHE

EDUCATION

HOMESCHOOLING

SMART START

Finding Homeschool Support on the Internet If you're interested in educating your children at home instead of sending them to school (about 850,000 kids in the U.S. were homeschooled in 1999), this is a great place to begin. The site is run by a mother who makes it all seem achievable. Copious, annotated links include curriculum guides and free software downloads. **[geocities.com/athens/8259]**

LIFE LESSONS

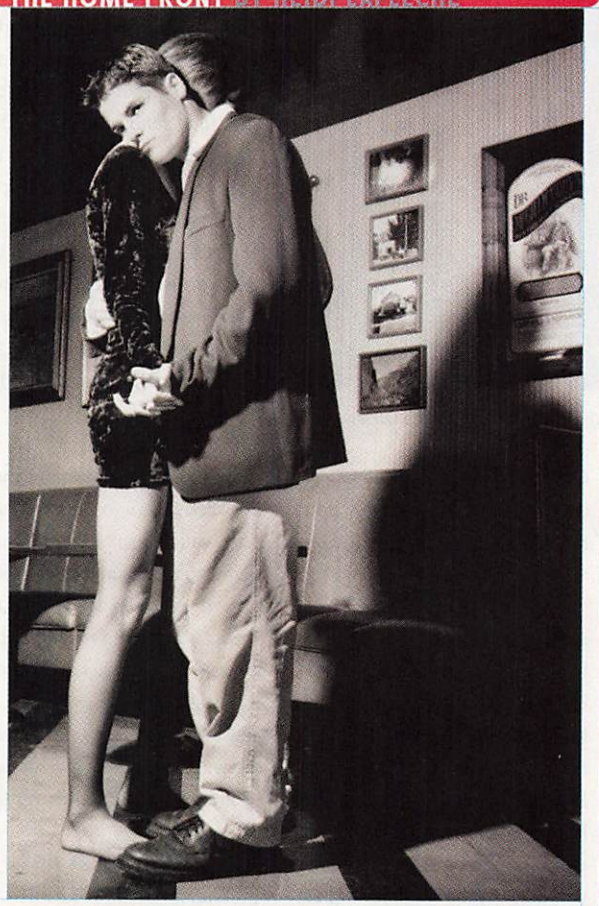
A to Z Home's Cool Homeschooling Web Site A to Z embraces the do-it-yourself spirit that can make homeschooling fun as well as effective. For example, the site not only shows you how to make bubbles, but also teaches you how to turn the experience into a physics lab. You can plan countless lessons using the exceptional library of links. **[gomilpitas.com/homeschooling]**

DISTANCE LEARNING

@InternetHomeSchool.com; Homeschool.com Don't want to go it alone? InternetHomeSchool provides online curricula for children in grades one through 12. It is an especially good resource for high schoolers. Daily check-ins and weekly work samples help keep home scholars focused. Annual fees range from $2,400 to $3,600 per child (plus a $150 textbook deposit), depending on whether you opt to do your own grading and/or pay in advance. For $20 per month, Homeschool's Learning Odyssey offers self-paced curricula for grades 1 through 8, based on learning activities and downloadable worksheets. Material is customized to your child's grade level after an initial free placement test. **[internethomeschool.com]; [homeschool.com]** KALISTA SALE

BRODGAR: MACDUFF EVERTON; ELIAS: JEFFREY DUNN FOR WGBH

THE HOME FRONT BY HEIDI LAFLECHE



TIES THAT FIND

Locate an old flame or high school pal online

With Valentine's Day on the horizon, February is a fine month in which to rekindle relationships cooled by time and distance. **Google [google.com]** helped me track down a 1980s club buddy named Danimal (tamed and now going by "Daniel"). Two college cohorts and a colleague from my first newspaper job used **Yahoo! [yahoo.com]** to find me. There's nothing like an e-mail with the subject line "Blast from the Past."

Start by typing that old flame's name into some search engines. (Hint: Put the name inside quotation marks to get the best results.) You could hit pay dirt, especially if your erstwhile pal has a personal home page or is listed in an online employee directory. Reach a dead end? Try the white pages feature found on portals such as **InfoSpace [infospace.com]**. These services can be useful if the person has a publicly listed phone number; just be prepared to click through lots of listings if it's a common name.

Looking to revisit a misspent youth? Many schools keep an alumni contact list at the increasingly ubiquitous **Classmates [classmates.com]**. This alumni hub boasts 25 million members and ranks among Nielsen/NetRatings' 25 top-trafficked sites (owing in part to its annoying pop-up ads). Classmates charges $29.95 for a year of access to cohorts' profiles ($19.95 for each subsequent year).

Get in a family way by finding long-lost relatives (or ones you never knew) at **FamilySearch [familysearch.org]**, a free service offered by the Mormons. If the person you're seeking serves our country, march over to **About: Genealogy: Military Genealogy Resources [genealogy.about.com/cs/military]** for an arsenal of tools and advice on searching military records to find enlisted friends and relatives.

If all else fails, investigative services such as **PeopleFind.com** and **PeopleSite [peoplesite.com]** search a variety of public records for a fee. Far-flung friends may be only a few clicks away.

RELATIONSHIPS

MATCHMAKERS

TRIED AND TRUE

Yahoo! Personals Our namesake portal is known for its user-friendliness, and no one makes it easier to connect. Within seconds of selecting your location and the type of relationship you seek (from pen pal to committed), you can instantly start perusing hundreds of potential partners—for free! It's also free to post a basic ad-with-photo and get a Personals Mailbox, with optional e-mail alerts; enhanced ads, with priority placement, are available for a fee. But don't take our word for it (even though we *are* editorially independent). Browse dozens of testimonials from ordinary people who found extraordinary success here. **[personals.yahoo.com]**

DIGITAL CUPID

Matchmaker This romantic crossroads claims to feed 50,000 new members to the love-hungry public each week—and the first two weeks are free. View a (seemingly never-ending) slide show of folks who are aching to connect. Questionnaires and rambling personal essays offer insight into potential partners. What's your sign? Hair color? You can always click on "Only my hairdresser knows." **[matchmaker.com]**

LOVERS AND OTHERS

FriendFinder.com Fill out the brief form and then search the member photos to browse the possibilities before handing over your credit card info. Beyond the usual romantic categories, such as men seeking women, you can also sign up for a pen pal or activity partner. Tennis, anyone? **[friendfinder.com]**

PAMELA DES BARRES

DANCING COUPLE: MICHAEL JANG/GETTYONE; SITTING COUPLE: KELVIN MURRAY/CORBIS

COMMUNITIES

ISLAMIC CULTURE

ARABIAN BYTES

ArabNet Recent incidents have revealed how little many of us know about the Muslim world. This English-language Saudi Arabian site provides good background information on the history and traditions of 22 Middle Eastern and North African nations. Afghanistan isn't among the countries featured, but the news section is bursting with stories about the war, and commentators offer perspectives the likes of which we don't often hear in the West. **[arab.net]**

COMMUNITY ACTION

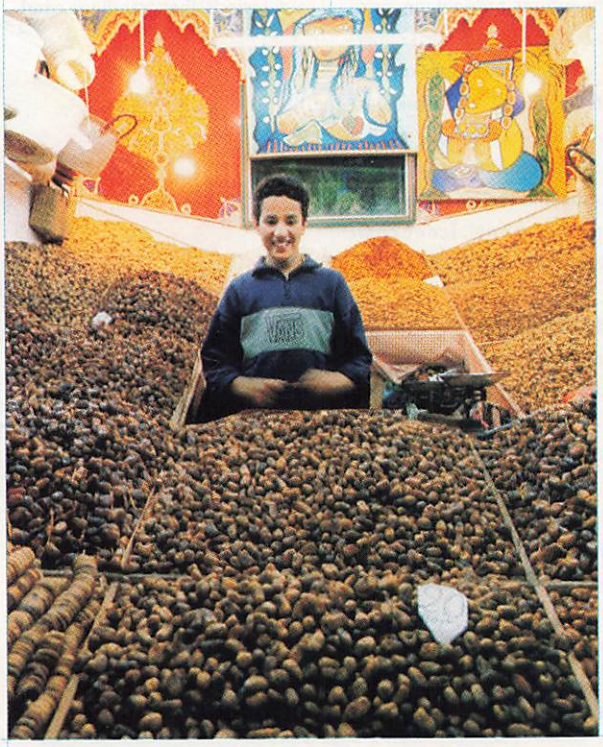
Planetarabia With offices in the U.S., the United Arab Emirates, Morocco, and Saudi Arabia, this full-service portal connects Arabs around the world with message boards, e-mail, personal ads, chat, and online shopping. Cultural coverage ranges from music and movies to recipes and the meaning of Arabic names. **[english.planetarabia.com]**

ALLAH'S PEOPLE

IslamiCity.com Religious in orientation, IslamiCity encompasses Muslims in Europe and Asia as well as the Middle East, with a special focus on the Sunni communities of North America. A search feature helps surfers locate nearby mosques. Translations of the Koran are available in 22 languages, and a multimedia center offers audio and video streams from Islamic TV and radio stations. **[islamicity.com]**

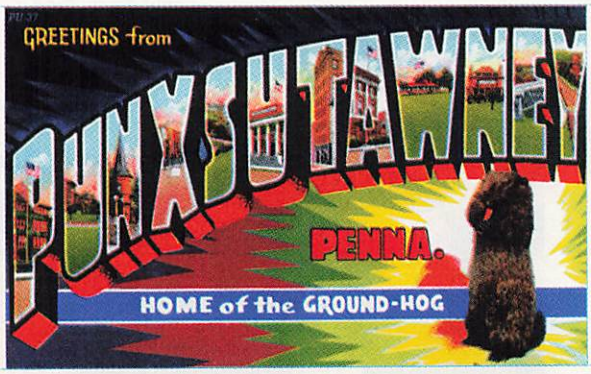
INTRO TO ISLAM

Islamic Studies, Islam, Arabic, and Religion Non-Muslims who'd like to learn more about Islam can turn to this site, developed by Dr. Alan Godlas, a professor in the department of religion at the University of Georgia. Unaffiliated with any particular sect, it offers a non-polemical view on Muslim beliefs and explores related topics, such as the mystical Sufism. **[www.arches.uga.edu/~godlas]** FRANK GREEN



MARKET VENDOR: ROY ZIPSTEIN; POSTCARD: © LAKE COUNTY MUSEUM/CORBIS

SPOTLIGHT BY HEIDI LAFLECHE



GROUNDHOG DAY—AGAIN

How long before we can shout, 'Spring has sprung'?

GROUNDHOG.ORG Every February 2, the Pennsylvania borough of Punxsutawney (pop. 6,800) goes hog-wild for its resident weather-predicting woodchuck, Phil. Get the lowdown on this year's annual trek to Gobbler's Knob for Phil's much-awaited prognostication (quick refresher: If he sees his shadow, we're doomed to six more weeks of winter). **[groundhog.org]**

HINTERLAND WHO'S WHO: WOODCHUCK Dig up fun facts on this hibernating marmot, courtesy of the Canadian Wildlife Service **[www.cws-scf.ec.gc.ca/hww-fap/woodchuc/woodchuc.html].**

FARMERS' ALMANAC.COM: WEATHER Don't trust a sleepy groundhog to know the score? Try the Farmers' Almanac, which bases its long-range weather projections "on its traditional 185-year-old secret formula." Click the map for a two-month regional forecast before you decide whether it's safe to crawl out of your hole. **[www.farmersalmanac.com/weather/weather.html]**

FAMILY SERVICES

EXPECTANT PARENTS

ANSWER ME

Childbirth.org From the instant they read "positive" on the pregnancy-test stick, most first-time parents are filled with wonder and worry—and lots and lots of questions. Get fast facts from Childbirth's informative FAQs, which cover everything from baby showers to cesareans. Submit personal e-mail queries to childbirth experts, or browse the Ask the Pros archive to learn what other expectant parents are wondering and worrying about. **[childbirth.org]**

TOOL KIT

BabyCenter What can you expect during pregnancy? BabyCenter walks you through every step of fetal development with easy-to-understand drawings and advice. Enter your baby's due date and sign up for free My Baby This Week updates. A-to-Z articles explore suddenly relevant topics such as travel during pregnancy, while numerous Cool Tools include an ovulation calculator, a pregnancy weight-gain estimator, and a baby namer. **[babycenter.com]** KALISTA SALE

MONEY MATTERS BY DEAN FOUST

OF HUMAN BROKERS

Log on to a flesh-and-blood financial pro

The skittishness of the stock market has left many investors convinced that they need professional help. For some, the answer may lie in the new breed of virtual advisers, including **DirectAdvice [directadvice.com]** and **Financial Engines [financialengines.com]**, which use sophisticated algorithms to help you build an investment strategy. But what if you want a human broker to hold your hand? The Web is becoming more helpful in that respect, too.

Already, the nation's largest online broker, **CharlesSchwab [schwab.com]**, offers to link customers (albeit with portfolios of more than $100,000) with a local financial adviser. And, ironically, **E*Trade [etrade.com]**—whose sassy ads long implored customers to "boot your broker"—is looking to develop a similar program that would connect its customers with professionals in their area.

How do you know which pros to trust? You can run your own background checks at **Investment Adviser Public Disclosure [adviserinfo.sec.gov]**, a database provided by the federal Securities and Exchange Commission that lets you view a financial planner's government filings. The site tells you how much money the firm manages, its fee schedule, and what partnerships it might have with banks, lawyers, or other outsiders.

GADGETS

DIGITAL CAMCORDERS

CRASH COURSE

Camcorderinfo.com Look out, Steven Spielberg: The latest digital camcorders give rank novices genuine moviemaking capabilities. To make sense of the confusing array of models, options, and prices, stop by the Consumers Corner here. The Digital Video section explains how to connect a camcorder to a computer and spells out the difference between interlaced and progressive-scan video. Ready to shop? The slick product-comparison tool powered by Pricegrabber.com lets you see how competitive models stack up. **[camcorderinfo.com]**

SAVVY SHOPPER

CNet: Camcorders Click on Find the Right Digital Camcorder to access CNet's buying guide, which conveniently groups products by price range and provides links to Gómez-rated vendors. Read notes on what features to look for in each price category. Editors' picks include succinct comments that highlight both the strengths and the weaknesses of a particular model. **[cnet.com/electronics/0-1429201.html]**

EXTRA CREDIT

2-Pop: Discussion Forums You got yourself a camera. Now what? Never fear: The dozens of active forums here dispense plenty of free advice. Drop by the Learning Center for tutorials that explain how to shoot, record sound, edit, and stream your video. Feeling the urge to upgrade? The site can help here, too: It posts reviews of the latest gadgets, plug-ins, and software. **[2-pop.com/boards]** CARL FRANZ, LORENA HAVENS

OCCASIONS

GIFTS FOR LOVERS

SEXY SAMPLERS

For Romantic Gifts Does the cliché of candy in a heart-shaped box leave you cold? Heat up Valentine's Day with a Pleasure Chest featuring chocolate body paint and other erotic goodies. Racier types might enjoy the Naughty...But Nice fuzzy handcuffs, leather blindfold, and feather tickler. Bottoms up! **[forromanticgifts.com]**

SWEET NOTHINGS

HenryandJune.com This online boutique can help you or your special someone look luscious in lingerie, no matter what size (misses, junior, or plus) or modesty level (from elegant loungewear to open-bust baby dolls). Men get their due, too. Although we can't imagine site namesake Henry Miller donning the silk charmeuse boxers, we *can* picture him sporting the mooing cow pouch with the bovine sound effects. **[henryandjune.com]**

BUSINESS ASSOCIATES: ERIK DREYER/GETTYONE; BLINDFOLD AND TICKLER: THOM O'CONNOR

INSTANT MASSAGE

Kama Sutra Collections Let your fingers do the talking with the fine art of massage. Try the Kama Sutra oils, or an edible massage cream (in assorted flavors). **[kamasutra.safeshopper.com]** KALISTA SALE

Cancer CONTINUED FROM PAGE 62

tional Cancer Institute's **CancerNet [cancernet.gov]**, which provided peer-reviewed summaries of treatments and a database of clinical trials in New York City. He also learned about the pros and cons of 3-D radiation therapy as well as something called brachytherapy, which is the implantation of radioactive seeds into the prostate at computer-calculated coordinates. We've since learned that the site is updated regularly by oncology and other experts, and the NIH is testing a LiveHelp feature that offers real-time research assistance.

While the site was informative, Dad says that many of the medical abstracts he found there confounded him with jargon. Time and again, he returned to MedlinePlus and CancerNet for a translation into layman's terms. But it was **InteliHealth [intelihealth.com]**, a hub that now partners with Harvard Medical School, that ultimately provided the best explanation of the medical mumbo jumbo. The site "gave me the vocabulary necessary to speak my doctors' language," he says. "Even when I was wrong about something I read on the Web, it led to a constructive conversation with my oncologist."

No one would agree with this sentiment more than Jeffrey, a friend's father-in-law, who was diagnosed with Hodgkin's disease around the same time my father found out he had prostate cancer. When Jeffrey received the news of his cancer, his wife, Susan, began reading about the illness at the **National Institutes of Health [www.nih.gov]** Web site. She learned a few things about this rare form of lymphoma, among them was that Hodgkin's disease tends to strike people between the ages of 15 and 34. Susan was puzzled: Jeffrey was in his midfifties. Jeffrey's doctor argued that a person can develop Hodgkin's disease at any age.

Even so, Jeffrey and Susan decided it would be wise to get a second opinion. Two days later, Jeffrey visited an oncologist for a second reading of his biopsy. This time, it was revealed that he had *non*-Hodgkin's lymphoma, a decidedly deadlier form of cancer. As a result of this news, he immediately began an aggressive treatment for his condition, and thankfully the disease was successfully curbed.

The message here is not that patients should second-guess their doctors, or that doctors make mistakes. It's that informed surfers make better patients. Of course, it's also possible to have too much of a good thing—my father is proof positive of this. As his Web savvy sharpened, he ventured to such sites as Google and AltaVista to create focused queries on specific prostate cancer treatments. From there he discovered a wealth of questionable sites hawking speculative treatments, including such medically unproven procedures as ozone infusions and hydrotherapy. Fortunately, Dad's searches also led him to **Quackwatch [quackwatch.com]**, a nonprofit organization that was founded by Dr. Stephen Barrett, a retired psychiatrist. The site's purpose is to debunk fraudulent health information and provide surfers with a forum for discussing misinformation. Recent threads have tackled such topics as alternative medicines, laser hair removal, and antiaging regimens.

Depending on how much surfing you do, you may or may not be surprised by how much quackery is promoted online. Misinformation is such a serious concern to the health care industry that researchers affiliated with several California medical institutions recently conducted a study on the Web's ability to deliver accurate medical information. In the study, which was published in the May 23/30, 2001, issue of *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, the group found that at 10 major English-language search engines, only one in five links led surfers to relevant health-related content.

Worse yet, the study discovered that even the most popular medical hubs are prone to error. More than half of the health sites reviewed provided surfers with contradictory information. While the report does not say which sites failed to make the grade, it notes that a childhood asthma site, for example, advised readers that "inhaled steroids do not stunt growth and later stated that inhaled steroids do stunt growth."

We picked up an important tip for judging the validity of online information from Emily Lipp, a researcher at the University of Michigan: Always check to see when health sites were last updated. Some medical sites may appear authoritative, she explained, even though they haven't been updated in years. Here's a trick that works, albeit with mixed success: In Netscape Communicator, click on View/Page Info. In Internet Explorer, type javascript:alert(document.lastModified) in the URL window.

Looking back, I realize how lucky my father was to have had an aspiring doctor in the family, someone who could vet his reams of Web page printouts. Of course, not everyone has that luxury. What then? When in doubt, surfers should make sure the sites they're taking advice from are approved by **HON: Health on the Net Foundation [www.hon.ch]**, a nonprofit group that has devised broad guidelines for publishing health-related content online. To receive the organization's seal of approval, sites are required to follow the eight principles set forth in the HONcode. These include a requirement that sites keep surfers' personal data confidential and that they offer medical advice that comes from qualified professionals. The code also asks that sites provide contact information to visitors and disclose who their advertisers are. (See "On-Site Examination," page 58.)

My father wasn't aware of the HONcode when he began his Web search. But he nonetheless says he felt educated enough to pick the right treatment. After his epic sweep of the Net, Dad ultimately chose radiation therapy. It wasn't an easy decision; it also wasn't one he could have made as thoughtfully without his online research.

It's been three years since my father's first radiation treatment, and his PSA count is way down. We're optimistic about a full recovery, but as he hasn't yet made it past the magic five-year mark that signifies remission, he still uses the Web to stay on top of the latest treatments.

The dot-com bust doesn't appear to have affected the Web's medical resources—there's never been so much publicly available health information, nor such direct access to experts. For example, at the **Prostate Cancer Research Institute [prostate-cancer.org]** surfers can join moderated mailing lists in the P2P (Patient to Physician) section; there they can pose questions about prostate cancer to experts. The page's archive goes back as far as March 1997.

I should know because I've been following it closely. In one recent forum thread, I learned that green tea may be a preventative agent against prostate cancer. I immediately called my dad to let him in on the news.

"Oh, I already saw that," he said. "Go look in your in-box. I e-mailed it to you yesterday."

His message to me included links to the NIH's **ClinicalTrials.gov** Web site, which lists approximately 5,700 clinical studies being conducted around the world. Dad had also found directories of clinical trials at the National Cancer Institute's **CancerTrials [cancertrials.nci.nih.gov]** and at **CenterWatch [centerwatch.com]**. The man who couldn't master drag-and-drop was suddenly beating me to the punch.

At the end of his e-mail, he wrote: "I'm just comforted knowing there are promising new drugs and vaccinations in the works." Personally, I'm comforted knowing that he has access to high-level information. This is the kind of thing that makes me optimistic about the Web's future. Not to mention my father's. ■

Bernie Yee has covered technology and entertainment for *The Washington Post* and *USA Today*.

Scheer CONTINUED FROM PAGE 48

life. All an investigator needs to do today is assert that the information relates to an "ongoing investigation of terrorism," even if you are not in any way the target of the investigation.

As Feingold said, "Under this bill, the government can compel the disclosure of the personal records of anyone—perhaps someone who worked with, or lived next door to, or went to school with, or sat on an airplane with, or has been seen in the company of, or whose phone number was called by—the target of the investigation." On that basis, he warns, they can grab everything from business records to medical records to books taken out of libraries. What makes this invasion of our privacy particularly chilling is that there is virtually no judicial restraint. Police, without legal expertise, will be making these decisions on their own.

Feingold said in our interview that while he doubts that the Internet or other aspects of the bill will be revisited in the near future, he believes that "the Internet and high-tech communities should press Congress to do oversight and should bring any examples of overreaching by the Justice Department to the attention of Congress."

In the meantime, Feingold is worried. "All indications are that the Justice Department intends to use its new powers very aggressively. One of the problems with the bill is the great opportunity for abuse that we may never know about. One of the purposes of warrants and judicial review is so that abuses and overreaches can be seen and stopped. Without those requirements, it is unclear just how innocent people will ever find out that the government is snooping on their e-mail or Internet use."

So why are we buying into this? Why is only one senator daring to object? One word: fear. It is true that we have experienced a terrible assault and loss of life, and it is understandable that we want to get rid of the bad guys by any means necessary. The problem is that these means are not necessary. They are, in fact, counterproductive, delivering victory to our enemies by undermining the freedom of our society.

There's wisdom in the old maxim that truth drives out terror. Sure, there's plenty of junk said and spread on the Internet, but for the most part it has emerged as a good way to get the truth out, a way to debate the facts and scotch the lies, including those issued by al-Qaeda. The more speech is restricted, the less safe we are.

Luckily we have one Russ Feingold on our side. Looks like it's time to put on that coonskin cap, Senator. ■

Mouse Calls CONTINUED FROM PAGE 65

and pharmacists simply call them up on-screen, they don't have to decipher an M.D.'s hieroglyphics. That means fewer medication errors.

But if computers have been such a boon to medical productivity, then why is it still so hard to get an appointment to see a doctor? Three reasons: economics, demographics, and medical advances.

While computer wizards can make big salaries right out of college, would-be doctors have to grind through medical school, assume a mountain of debt, and be on call every third night to make the same money. Consequently, medical careers aren't as attractive as they used to be, and the number of primary care physicians isn't keeping up with the population. What's more, there are more elderly people—the biggest medical consumers—alive now than ever before; sometimes it can feel as if all of them are trying to see your doctor.

According to a recent survey by the Massachusetts Medical Society, the cost of running a practice has soared 60 percent since 1992. Doctors' fees, however, have fallen, because Medicare and managed-care companies have tightened up on reimbursements. As a result, during the past decade, median physician income has fallen about 14 percent (adjusted for inflation) from $140,000 a year in 1992 to $120,600 in 2000. To slow this erosion, physicians have trimmed support staff. Doctors are working more, up from 50 hours a week in 1992 to 53 last year. The upshot is that appointments are getting shorter, dropping from an average of 25 minutes not long ago to just 19 minutes today.

So while the Net has created substantial productivity gains for doctors, this time has been eaten up by the demands of an increasingly alienating medical rat race. It's enough to make doctors nostalgic for Dictaphones. And it's the reason why medical consumers often feel they're getting the bum's rush.

It's easy to imagine that mouse calls might improve things, making doctors even more productive and giving consumers more access to them—or at least their on-screen images. Medical consumers, for their part, appear to be ready for Web-based medicine. A Harris Interactive survey showed that some 80 percent of people online would like their doctors to communicate with them via e-mail. However, a survey last year by Fulcrum Analytics showed that only 19 percent of doctors currently do so.

Why are so few doctors hitting the Reply button? In part because most cherish face-to-face consultations. "I'll authorize routine prescription refills by e-mail, or tell patients that all their lab tests are normal," Rubin says. "But if there's anything that needs to be discussed, that should be done in person, not by e-mail, not even over the phone. Sure, information can be relayed over the phone or by e-mail, but there's more to a doctor-patient relationship than just transmission of information. There's sympathy, reassurance, and caring, and they require face-to-face contact."

That may change. A new generation of physicians is moving into medicine, a generation raised on video games and constant communication, a generation that feels more comfortable with human interaction over the Net. In Boston, the Partners HealthCare System, which includes 6,000 doctors, recently launched a service that provides medical consultations over the Web (**Partners Online Specialty Consultations [www.partners.org/econsults]**). At a cost of $600, however, it's not too surprising that so far only 100 consumers have registered.

But it *is* a start. Mouse calls appear destined to grow from a curiosity into a necessity. For everyday medical concerns, most people don't need big workups or sympathetic hand-holding. They just need reassurance that the problem isn't serious, some home-care suggestions, and maybe some medication, often an over-the-counter product. Easy access to Web-based care could mitigate the recent decreases in doctor-patient contact. It's not much of a leap to envision expert surgeons using Web cams to look over the shoulder of less experienced colleagues in operating rooms far away, and, further down the road, performing the operation themselves via robotic hands and "telepresence." (In fact, such an operation recently took place in France.)

Medical culture, however, evolves slowly and cautiously—a fact we're all grateful for, despite our whiz-bang fantasies (after all, this is our *health* we're talking about). For now, if you're interested in getting those nagging symptoms checked, these Tomorrowland promises are currently on hold—the same place you'll be the next time you call for an appointment. ■

Michael Castleman, a San Francisco-based health writer, is the author of 10 books on health, most recently *Blended Medicine*. Research assistance by Meaghan O'Neill.

WE TEST ONE CATEGORY IN DEPTH...ENVELOPES, PLEASE BY ALAN COHEN

BEST CAR-BUYING SITES

AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

Each time we go shopping for a new car online (this is our third annual outing), we find more and more that car buyers can accomplish without ever getting up out of their chair—let alone (*gasp!*) visit a showroom. Initially, we could do some online research and get referrals to dealers, who would then call us with quotes. Last year, CarsDirect and Greenlight (acquired by CarsDirect in February 2001) upped the ante by offering sales directly through a Web site, complete with no-haggle pricing. This year, dealers have gotten into the act, big time. Many salespeople are now adept at e-mail—and are willing to contact you, answer questions, and often negotiate deals that way.

Still, there's a long way to go. While 62 percent of car buyers are turning to the Net for information and advice, just 6 percent are purchasing autos online, according to J.D. Power and Associates. That leaves a lot more shoppers to woo—and explains why the best car-buying hubs have been beefing up their research centers and dealer networks, as well as offering more tools than ever, including slick 360-degree views of the vehicles. Even if you plan to visit a showroom, stop by one of these sites first; it may help you find the model—and the price—that's right for you.

Peruse some other excellent resources, too—sites that can help you find financing, show you what other consumers are paying for the same car, and explain why you might want to think twice about that extended warranty. Use them wisely and your next car will be easy on the eyes, the wallet, *and* the nerves.

AND THE WINNERS ARE . . .

BEST OVERALL

CARSDIRECT.COM [carsdirect.com]

CarsDirect has this wacky idea that we don't like haggling with the salesman or waiting while he goes to "talk with the manager." So it cuts to the chase. Pick a car, configure it, and get a price on your screen right away—instead of waiting for a dealer to get back to you, which you'll need to do at other sites. And don't worry if you press the Buy button. It just sets the wheels in motion, putting you in contact with a service rep who tracks down the vehicle from among CarsDirect's 3,000 dealers. You have plenty of time to back out—but you may not want to. Prices here were among the lowest we found. That's not to say the runner-up sites lack strong points. **MSN Carpoint** boasts a first-rate research center, where you can dig deep into specs and see what other people think about cars you're looking at. **Autobytel.com**'s quote-request interface needs some work, but its dealers were among the most tech-savvy of the bunch, promptly e-mailing us quotes and fielding questions via computer. **AutoNation.com** has the fewest dealers in its network, but some have online inventories that let you see what's in stock. Finally, while it offers few frills, **CarPrices.com** did lead us to some of the best car quotes we found, and it serves up a handy chat section where you can get advice from other buyers. (For an overview of the major hubs, see "Report Card," page 94.)

BEST USED CARS

AUTOTRADER.COM [autotrader.com]

AutoTrader hasn't become any slicker in the year since we named it best used-car site, but like a 100,000-mile Toyota, it still gets the job done. It has more listings than anyone—over 1.5 million—and a terrific Decision Guide that lets you specify price, gas mileage, and options, such as antilock brakes. The listings—from dealers, manufacturers, and private sellers—vary in detail, but you can always e-mail sellers your questions. If you're not fazed by auctions, there's a link to eBay Motors (a joint effort between AutoTrader and eBay), which offers a growing selection of used, and often vintage, cars.

BEST PRICE GUIDE

EDMUNDS.COM

[edmunds.com]

Any decent car-buying site will tell you the invoice price of an automobile (the published price to the dealer) and the manufacturer's suggested retail price (or MSRP). What most *won't* supply, however, is that crucial figure in between: What people actually pay. That's why Edmunds' is indispensable. Its proprietary tracking system, True Market Value Prices, monitors the marketplace, noting current supply and demand. Then it calculates a price that both you and the dealer can live with. Edmunds' used-car price guide is slick, too.

BEST CAR-BUYING TIPS

CARBUYINGTIPS.COM

[carbuyingtips.com]

Whether you're buying your first car or your 10th, a stop here can save you time, money, or grief—and sometimes all three. The site's savvy tips include advice on extended warranties (you don't have to buy them from the dealer, and often they're much cheaper elsewhere); putting down a deposit (always do it on a credit card, never in cash); and how to deal with an aggressive salesperson (bring a friend—that way, he has to convince both of you).

BEST CAR COMMUNITY

YAHOO! AUTOS: TALK CARS

[autos.yahoo.com/talk.html]

A new car is a big purchase, so we don't blame you for wanting to talk it over with someone first. Happily, knowledgeable auto buffs are easy to find on the extremely active message boards at Yahoo! Autos, where you can ask away—or hold forth—on everything from the latest Volkswagen Jetta to vintage Mercury Marauders. Or join one of the many car-related Yahoo! Groups (there are more than 80 on Corvettes alone).

REPORT CARD » GRADING THE TOP CAR-BUYING SITES

THE BASICS	DEALS AND DEALERS	SALES PRESSURE	RESEARCH	EXTRAS/CAVEATS	OVERALL
CARSDIRECT.COM [carsdirect.com]	A- Has 3,000 dealers. Configure car on site, see price; service rep tracks it down, helps with paperwork. Got good price on Honda ($20,382) right away.	B+ No-haggle price. Rep spelled out all fees, was responsive to e-mail and phone queries (though took two days to call back). Many chances to back out.	B Detailed specs. 360-degree views and expert reviews, but not for every car. No user reviews. Can compare 3 cars side by side. Too-brief Buying Guides.	A Can save configured cars for 30 days. Prices of stored cars valid for 48 hours. If you buy vehicle and find it cheaper within 3 days, get back price difference.	A-
MSN: CARPOINT [carpoint.com]	B- Has 3,700 dealers. Choose and configure car; request is referred to local dealer, who contacts you with price. Initial Honda quote was high: $22,900.	B Get ready to haggle. Dealer was responsive to e-mail but lowered his quote (to $20,195) only after we mentioned the lower price on CarsDirect.	A See manufacturer rebates, warranties; detailed specs. User/expert reviews for most models; 360-degree views for over 200. Compare 2 cars side by side.	B+ Excellent buying tutorials. Can research used cars, too, including reliability ratings. My Car page gives you local gas prices, real-time traffic reports.	B+
AUTOBYTEL.COM [autobytel.com]	B Has 5,000 dealers. You pick model, transmission/engine, color—but can't add car-specific options. Dealer contacts you with price. Honda quote: $20,400.	A- No-haggle price. No option for e-mail contact preference, but dealer was responsive to the e-mails we sent without pushing a sale.	B Detailed specs, rebates, recalls. Few expert reviews. One small photo for each car, but most have 360-degree interior views. Compare multiple models.	B- Get-a-quote interface gives same set of options for each car; some may not be available for your model. Used-car listings. Can save cars to My Garage.	B
AUTONATION.COM [autonation.com]	B Has 368 dealers in 17 states. Some have online inventory, so you can pick model and options (but not configure). Honda quote: $20,317.	B No-haggle price, but dealer seemed more interested in getting us into the showroom than answering questions via e-mail.	C+ No dealer invoice prices. Only basic specs. Expert reviews, 360-degree interior views—for some models. Can compare 2 vehicles side by side.	B- Online form lets you apply for financing with AutoNation dealer. Can search for used cars, too. Can save vehicles you like to personal notebook.	B-
CARPRICES.COM [carprices.com]	B+ Access to 8,000+ dealers. Choose, configure car; dealer gives quote, and often you'll get an estimated price on-screen. Lowest Honda quote of the lot: $20,232.	B- Prices negotiable. Dealer left two phone messages to call for quote (no e-mail option). Gave good price for 2001 car, but made hard sell for an expected 2002 model.	C Minimal specs, one photo per car (no 360-degree views). Some reviews. Recall and rebate information. Compares up to 4 cars (but only basic specs).	B- Car Chat is a fairly active message board. Cursory tutorials, though site links to a nice overview of automobile leasing. Save cars in virtual garage.	B-

HOW WE RATED THE SITES: To assess how—and if—each site improved upon the showroom experience, we went through the steps of buying a 2001 Honda CR-V EX (except purchase). We also shopped informally for other cars. Most important were how easily we could get a quote and how much information we could get online. Testing took place in November 2001; grades do not reflect upgrades since then.

BEST MANUFACTURER SITE

SATURN

[saturn.com]

Most carmaker sites are equipped with a standard set of features: A build-a-car tool that lets you configure a model and get a sticker price, product photos, a dealer directory. Saturn goes far beyond. Its configuration tool is among the best designed; its virtual tours zoom in on practically every car feature (even the daytime running lamps), and you can arrange a test drive online and e-mail questions to a dealer. Once you buy your Saturn, the site really kicks into gear, with a personalized maintenance schedule, e-mail service reminders, and even online CarCare clinics. Kudos, too, for the information on installing adaptive devices, which help disabled drivers get the most out of their new Saturn. (For more on manufacturer sites, see "A Closer Look," right.)

BEST VIRTUAL SHOWROOM

MSN: CARPOINT

[carpoint.com]

Now we don't even have to leave home to feel bad about not owning that BMW Z3 Roadster: Carpoint's 360-degree video rubs it in quite nicely, letting us spin the car on its axis and see it from every conceivable angle. Luckily, Carpoint knows our budget as well as our taste; you can take over 200 different models for a virtual spin.

BEST AUTO FINANCING

LENDINGTREE

[lendingtree.com]

Not in the mood to spend your weekend checking interest rates on online bank sites? Spend 15 minutes on LendingTree instead. Here you fill out one application and get quotes from up to four financial institutions, from a roster of 140-plus lenders, including such powerhouses as Citibank and PNC Bank. Handy calculators show you whether it pays to lease. And if you've never dealt with the banks that give you the best quotes, a lender scorecard supplies user ratings. ■

A CLOSER LOOK: CAR MANUFACTURER SITES

A well-designed online showroom can help us home in on our dream ride, locate a dealer who has it in stock, and let us take the car for a virtual spin. Then, once we've signed the papers, it can assist with maintenance. Our Gold Star winner, Saturn, does all these things well (see Best Manufacturer Site, left). But other automakers also shine. Here are the ones we like most.

BEST CUSTOMER SUPPORT

BMW

[www.bmw.com]

Famed for its customer support offline, BMW pulls it off online as well, with a terrific free service called Owner's Circle. Register your BMW and you'll get a personalized Web page where you can track your loan or lease payments, keep tabs on your mileage, call up FAQs on your model, and locate your local service center. Should anything still be unclear, a handy e-mail interface lets you dash off questions.

BEST ONLINE INVENTORY

FORDDIRECT.COM

[forddirect.com]

Enter your ZIP code, pick a Ford, configure it with the trim level, colors (exterior and interior), engine, transmission, and options you want: FordDirect tells you instantly which local dealers have it in stock. If there's no exact match, you'll be shown the closest fits, and you can search for used cars at the dealerships, too. GM and Honda offer a similar tool—but Ford's is slicker and easier to use.

BEST LOOK UNDER THE HOOD

MERCEDES-BENZ

[www.mercedes.com]

If you're curious about what makes a car tick, Mercedes serves up a fascinating look at the past, present, and future of vehicular technology. Read up on how antilock brakes work and why engineers think there's a lot of potential in fuel cells. Then take an inside peek at some far-out Mercedes concept cars, such as the Internet-enabled automobile that has its own IP address, letting technicians monitor systems and run diagnostics while you're cruising down the highway.

BEST SPECS DETAIL

VOLVO GROUP

[volvo.com]

All automaker sites provide a list of specs, as do the big car-buying hubs, such as CarsDirect. But at Volvo, you can actually learn what each feature does, and even see a photo or illustration (which will certainly set your mind at ease about those "anti-submarine" seats on the C70 coupé). No amenity is too small for the full treatment, so if you must know what the cup holders on the S60 sedan look like, it's your lucky day.

BEST MULTIMEDIA

VW.COM

[vw.com]

As you'd expect from the folks who brought us Beetlemania, the Volkswagen site has a whimsical, offbeat design and is filled with enough sights and sounds to do an auto show in Vegas proud. Clever animations and videos take you inside new models such as the EuroVan, providing enough detail to make you an authority on the car before you ever drive it. You can watch more than a dozen of those hip VW commercials, see some behind-the-scenes footage,

and even catch short flicks from **AtomFilms [www.atomfilms.com]** at the local drive-in.

BEST AUTOMOTIVE SHRINE

CADILLAC

[cadillac.com]

If you think that Seville in the neighbor's driveway is just another car, you're obviously new to the storied world of Cadillacs. But don't worry: This site will set you straight about the company's proud heritage, from the tanks it built during World War II to the many incarnations of its famed wreath-and-crest emblem. For owners who already know this stuff (and we suspect they number more than a few), you'll find links galore to Cadillac clubs and associations, as well as shops and publications that can help you restore vintage Caddies. Only a car? Think again.

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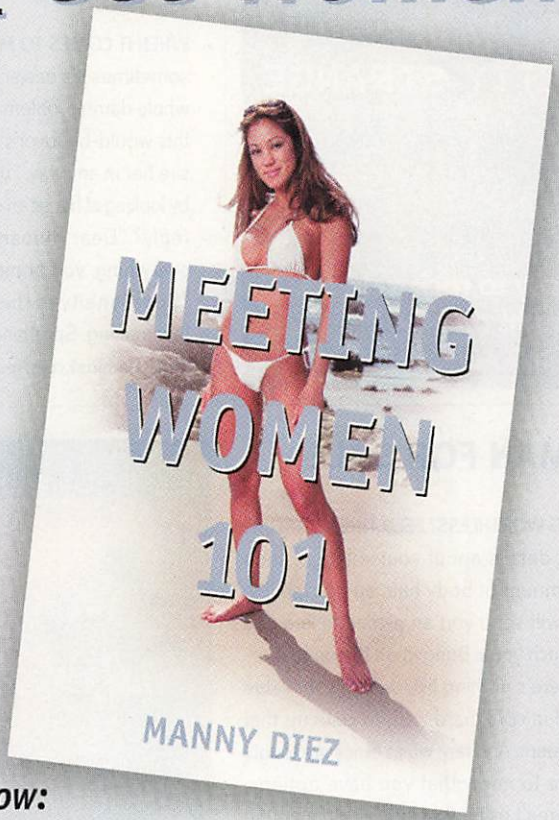

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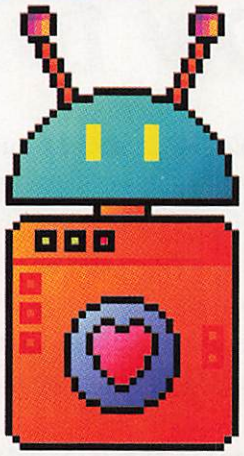

WHEN IT COMES TO MATTERS OF THE HEART, sometimes it's easier to punt and assign the whole damn problem to a computer. Witness this would-be lover's dilemma: "When I desire her in any way, I undermine her freedom by looking at her as an object." Lovetron 5000's reply? "Dear Human: Stop overanalyzing everything, you pompous ass." Remember, "Spontaneity is the key to adventurous lovemaking. Spontaneity, and marshmallow fluff." **[iamlost.com/features/lovetron]**

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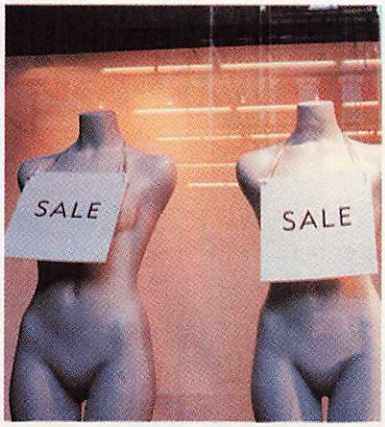

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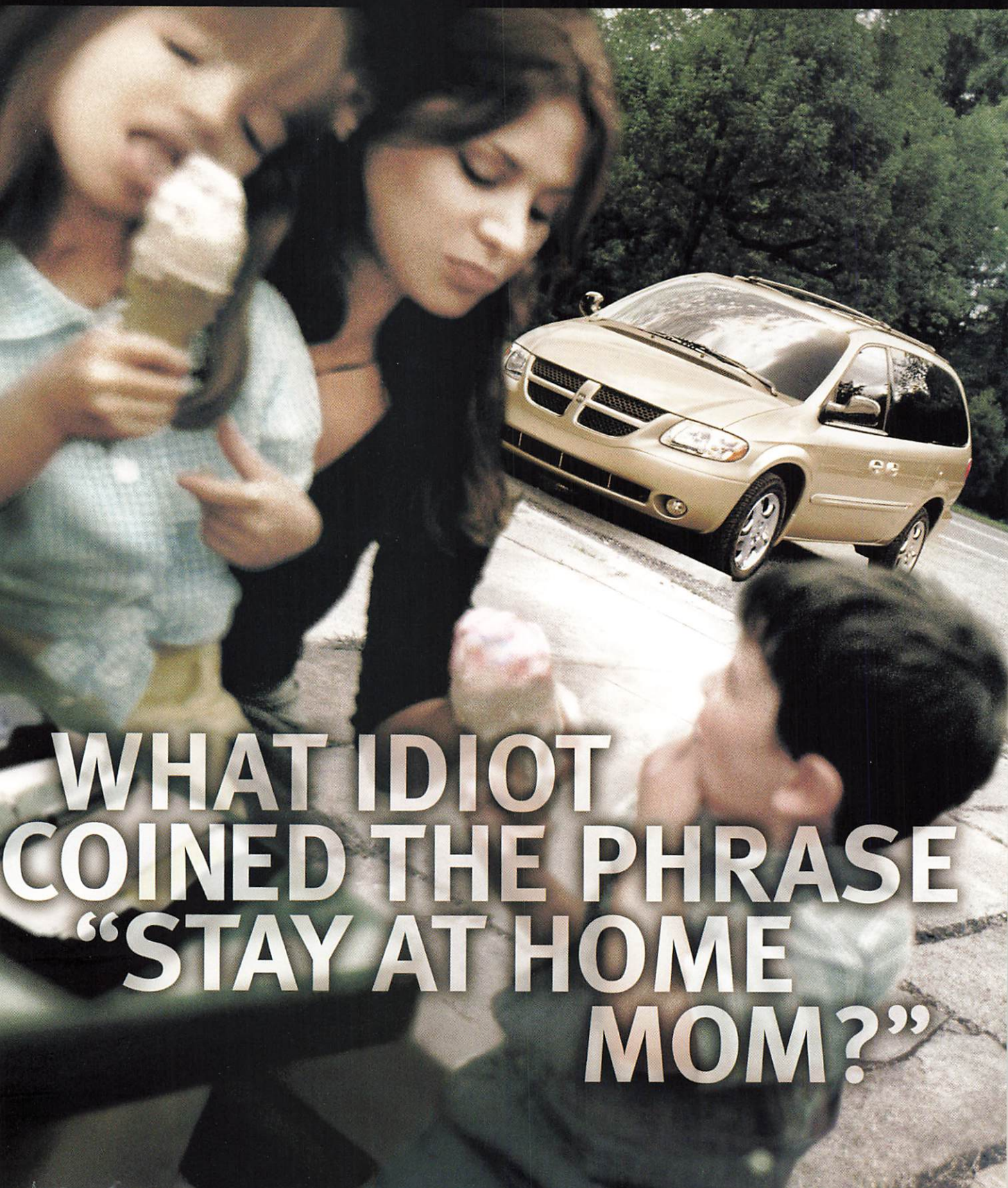

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